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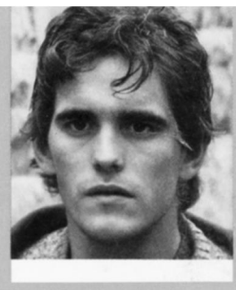

Volume 47
Number 1
Fall 1993

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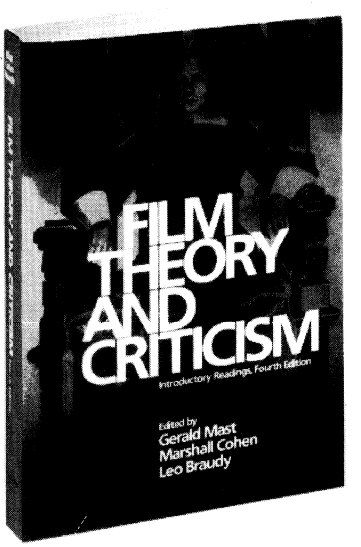

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David Ehrenstein

Out of the

An Interview

For someone like myself, an admirer of Sally Potter's work for many years, it was rather strange to hear her name cropping up in the backchat along the 1993 film festival circuit. A "new" British film-maker, so the word went, had just been "discovered," thanks to her brilliant adaptation of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. Times being what they are, *anything* that gets a talented film-maker the attention he or she deserves is welcome, even—as in Potter's case—if it means declaring a writer-director with a 25-year-long career a "debutante."

In a way, using *Orlando* as a starting point for Potter isn't such a bad idea. A musician and choreographer whose first films were integrated into the performances of her Limited Dance Company, Potter gained some small notice in 1979 for her featurette, *Thriller*. A witty deconstruction of Puccini's *La Bohème*, it became an item of interest in academic film and theory circles, but can't be said to have impacted the so-called mainstream in any way.

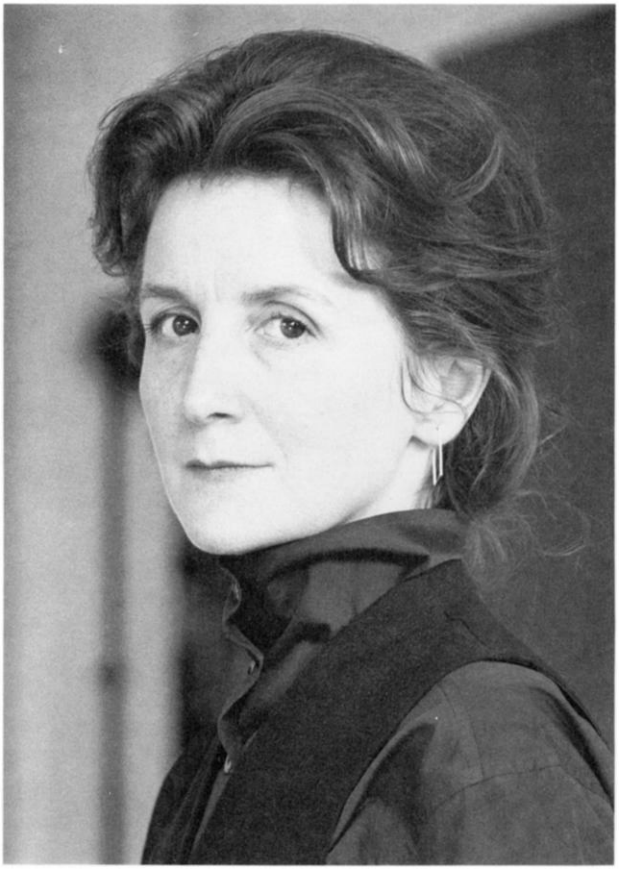
Her next film, *The Gold Diggers*, starring Julie Christie, *should* have put Potter on the map. But this elaborate, plotless exploration of capitalism and the romantic iconography of women, produced for the BFI, was savagely attacked when it debuted in 1983, and never found an audience. Critics who'd been charmed by the BFI production that preceded it—Peter Greenaway's *The Draughtsman's Contract*—didn't respond to Potter's experimental designs, and (much like the critics of America's N.E.A.) began to question why state funding should be involved in such an enterprise.

With *Orlando*, things couldn't be more different. Instead of brickbats, bouquets have been tossed Potter's way. Her adaptation of Woolf's fanciful tale of an Elizabethan-era youth who lives for over 400 years—turning into a woman in the process—has been given the sort of notice "art" films haven't received since . . . well, since *The Draughtsman's Contract*. Though Potter utilized that film's set decorators and cast actress Tilda Swinton—director Derek Jarman's muse—in the title role, *Orlando* remains a work at one with everything that its maker has produced before. Consequently, the fact that with *Orlando* Potter has achieved success doesn't mean she's changed, but that critics and audiences have finally caught up to where she was to begin with. Turning a verbally dense work of literature into a highly visual film, Potter has managed to make of *Orlando* a work that touches on such hot-button issues as feminism, imperialism, and gender and gay/lesbian politics, all the while seducing audiences that would be loathe to deal with such topics head-on.

With Swinton's figure as anchor—a calm center in a storm of images—Potter transforms the screen into a living pop-up book of British history. Mirroring the way in which humans and events and the passage of time nearly overwhelm the hero/heroine, *Orlando* is a work of constantly shifting visual/dramatic perspective. Like *The Magnificent Ambersons,* it charts the passing of an era. Like *Tales of Hoffman,* it drowns us in the pure, luxuriant sensation of the visible. Like *Hellzapoppin,* it constantly pulls the rug out from under its own story, and the viewer as well in the process. Like no other film of the moment, it demonstrates that art and pleasure are not mutually exclusive categories of experience.

Wilderness

with Sally Potter



Hugo Glendinning

Interview

DAVID EHRENSTEIN: *I imagine you were extremely discouraged after* The Gold Diggers. *Did you think you might not make another film?*

SALLY POTTER: After *The Gold Diggers* I was cinematically in the wilderness for a decade. I knew that would happen the moment the film came out. I even said to a friend, "It's going to take me ten years to get back to where I want to be." That was not said with a light heart. That was said with the attitude of a budding Sisyphus. I did do other things, of course: a television series, a documentary, a short musical film called *The London Story*, a big music piece, and a lot of writing. In a way, I gathered myself together, looked myself in the eye, and said, "What do I need to learn so that this doesn't happen again?" With hindsight, I can see that that was a totally invaluable experience.

What's the most important thing you learned from it all?

To fully assume my role as a director without conceding to collective strategies. *The Gold Diggers* was a collaborative project. I worked very closely with the other women who wrote the script. I was never in the position that I was in later with *Orlando,* of both collaborating with a wonderfully skilled professional team and being in the thoroughly solitary position of the person who makes all the major decisions. *The Gold Diggers* came out of a practice in the theater of going with the moment, incorporating ideas, and not being completely text-bound.

There's probably nothing I'd do differently if I were to do it today, but I learned that if you have a rock-solid script, you can move really fast to get to what you need, and *then* you can improvise and make changes at the spur of the moment.

There were visual and dramatic ideas in The Gold Diggers *very much related to lesbian politics.*

Those ideas were there, but stated at an angle like everything else in the film. It was very deliberate. I didn't want to put anything "on the nose." It was an alchemical text. Everything in it was in a state of flux.

And people weren't ready for something like that?

I learned from travelling with *The Gold Diggers,* and *really* listening to people, and watching them walk out—or not, as the case may be. There are some

An alchemical text: Sally Potter's *The Gold Diggers*

fanatical lovers of that film. A number of Ph.D.'s have been written about it, and I still get letters from people who say it changed their lives. Julie Christie always says that it's her favorite film, and we're still really good friends. I have to make an effort not to be overly critical about it myself, although in the privacy of my heart I am, because it failed to do what I hoped it would do. I always hoped for it to simultaneously work on different levels. I wanted people to be able to engage it on the most complex and subtle level if they wished, or at the surface level of sheer intoxication of the senses.

The Gold Diggers simply didn't work as a piece of entertainment for the vast majority of its audience and its critics. So it's very satisfying to me to sit in a cinema with *Orlando* and see not one person leave for the whole time, and for it to be a full house, and for it to be number one in London, and number three for seven weeks, when things like *Scent of a Woman* came and went. We're talking a major commercial success.

How did you come to collaborate with Tilda Swinton?

For me, casting her was the first big decision. Given the nature of the story, the person who plays the part is the one who's going to unlock it. So the first thing I did—before the script—were the photographs of Tilda as Orlando. I took her down to Knoll, the building the house in the novel was originally based on, and said I was doing a research project. They couldn't understand why my companion was in full Victorian dress. And I whipped out my Nikon and got my pictures! But the result of that half-day's shoot is so similar to the feeling of the finished film.

You thank Michael Powell—who died before the film was shot—in the end credits. How did he help you?

Michael Powell helped inspirationally in the most enormously sweet way. It was his generosity of spirit—looking me in the eye and saying "You *can* do it," talking about it as "our" project that he was so "proud to be associated with," things like that. Here was someone in his early eighties, with years of bitterness behind him. After *Peeping Tom*, he was in the wilderness. So the credit is a homage not just to his work, but also to what he gave personally. Tilda said her feeling in watching us together was of him psychically handing over the baton to me.

There's one thing I think I unconsciously stole from his film *Gone to Earth*: the scene where she's running in the garden in her dress. That's the key to using costumes in films—you have to discover how they move.

Many people would find adapting Orlando *a daunting prospect. It seems such a literary work.*

Orlando is to me the most cinematic of Virginia Woolf's books. In her diaries she calls it "exteriorizing consciousness." She was trying to find images for the stream of consciousness—as opposed to words. One or two critics thought of the book as a fluffy piece; lightweight in comparison to her more "serious" literary excursions. I totally disagree. I think it's as profound as her other works. And sometimes when somebody sets out to make an "entertainment" the more serious issues surface in their own right in a less pedantic or polemic way.

I don't think it's possible for a viewer to see Orlando *and not connect it to today's debates about feminism, gender, and queer politics.*

Orlando is a very gentle, very passionate look at the blurring of sexual identity and the nonsense of femininity and masculinity as constructions, and it's all done in the sweetest and kindest and most loving way. Maybe it's a reflection of Woolf's own life. I don't know if she would have ever called herself lesbian, or bisexual, or some such word. She made reference to the "Sapphic thread" that ran through her marriage. These were all coexistent facets of sexual identity in a group of people who were moving through and blurring their own sexual identities; not claiming any one of them as a political statement, because that wasn't desirable for them at that time.

Politics to one side, the film shows an enormous interest in formal strategies—trying to deal with character and drama in new ways. Many of your ideas appear to come from your work dance theater.

What you're doing in making a film is choreographing the relationship between the camera, the actors, and the space. There are an infinite number of ways to bring each scene alive. You can look at it directly, or through the subtext, or you can look at it obliquely. Take the scene where Orlando learns that she's lost the house and the two guys give her the document and then leave. I spent ages setting up the shot so they would disappear between Orlando and Shelmerdine, and it would look like there was suddenly a hole in the house—a door opens in the back. Their heads go down, and Orlando and Shelmerdine come forward. It's a very elementary piece of choreography.

How did you come to cast Billy Zane as Shelmerdine—Lady Orlando's great love affair?

I first saw him in "Twin Peaks." It was a very small part, but I sat up because he had real presence and beauty—slightly androgynous beauty. Also he had a

Sexual identity: Orlando (Tilda Swinton, left) and Shelmerdine (Billy Zane)

kind of upright bearing. He's very Errol Flynn—which is quite rare now.

Whose idea was it to get Quentin Crisp for Queen Elizabeth I?

Mine! That was a divine inspiration. I'm profoundly proud of this piece of casting. He took it very calmly. I met him in New York to do a reading. I saw him coming down the street from a distance, and realized he was walking very, very slowly. It was a curious moment, because I didn't know whether to stand there and watch, or whether this might somehow cause him some embarrassment. So I slipped back into the shadows and just peeked around. It was so moving, seeing him pick his way, slowly and with enormous dignity, along the Lower East Side. Anyway, we had a great meeting and he read beautifully. I asked him if he had any questions, and he said, "No, I understand it *completely*!"

You juxtapose him with Jimmy Sommerville, the gay pop singer, who also appears at the end of the film as an angel.

Well, Jimmy Sommerville *is* an angel. But casting him also had to do with emphasizing the high part of the male voice, which is a running theme in the film. It's a wonderful part of the voice, and I know from music that the whole thing about women having high voices and men having low voices is all rubbish. So I rewrote the ending so that the film would be bracketed by Jimmy. It's an equivalent to something that Virginia Woolf suggests in the end paragraphs of the book: you're not sure whether it's a bird flying over a tree or an airplane. But there's this feeling of sky. So I end the film this way on a high, on an up—in ecstasy.

Initially I just wanted him for the first scene, where he serenades the Queen as she comes in on her barge. The idea is Jimmy Sommerville parading Quentin Crisp—welcoming him back to England. Putting that on film was too good to be true.

Sally Potter directing Quentin Crisp as Queen Elizabeth I on the set of *Orlando*

Do you think Orlando *speaks to issues related to today's gay and lesbian politics?*

I'm so wary of making any sort of generalization because of what happened to the feminist movement. "Feminist" has become a sort of trigger word that closes down thinking rather than opening it up. I was very interested to see a recent issue of *New York* magazine with k. d. lang on the cover and the headline "Lesbian Chic"—as if it were all just *fashion*. Still, these public moments of shifts of acceptability have significance. Perhaps it's a result of the long, slow burn of activism, and the courage of a great number of people, and of course AIDS; the whole kind of sudden waking-up people have had to do around that issue. So I think those are really significant gains, and gay and lesbian cinema can be seen in relation to them.

As for *Orlando* and where it fits in, I really think that the film's contribution to that area is not so much

about gaining identity as it is blurring identity. It's about the claiming of an essential self, not just in sexual terms. It's about the immortal soul.

You were speaking of feminism as a "trigger word". . . .

Feminism is a really difficult thing to talk about. I've been asked so many times by the, let's say, populist sort of journalists: "Are you a feminist?" It's like laying the gauntlet down. If I say yes, then it's—Ah, we know who *she* is and we'll put her back in her box and we don't need to think about her anymore. But more important than that was that they all thought they knew what a feminist was. So if I said, "Yes, I'm a feminist," it would slot in with their definition, which was a cliché of a protesting radical—everything they fear. But I've learned that to win, you've got to have cover. You've got to be clever. You've got to speak freshly with nice juicy words that intoxicate—not trigger jargon words that turn people off. If I talk about treating women with respect and dignity, not as second-class citizens, able to make a contribution with freedom and without limitation—it gets the point across.

The other thing that I think is problematic about the word "feminist" at this point—at least in England, I imagine it's different in the U.S.—is that it doesn't necessarily imply linking up with other liberation struggles. People who are fighting for women's liberation have got to realize they're also fighting for gay and lesbian liberation, and all the other liberations. You cannot have this thing called "the liberated woman." There is no one woman, and it leads to a cheap, commercialized view of liberation.

It seems that now you're in a situation that's the opposite of where you were after The Gold Diggers.

It's a lot nicer to be wanted than not wanted! I think I'm just about old enough to remain fairly centered and unseduceable by certain things. For example, money. It's not that I'm not interested in it, it's just that I've learned so well to survive on debts. To have money and to end up with work you're not very proud of is totally pointless. Orson Welles said film-makers have to be like cotton pickers—go where the harvest is. It comes down to the project and the terms, and the only terms I know how to produce are the ones where I'm in complete control.

■ David Ehrenstein is the author of *The Scorsese Pictures: The Art and Life of Martin Scorsese* (Birch Lane Press, 1992) and *Film: The Front Line—1984* (Arden Press, 1984).

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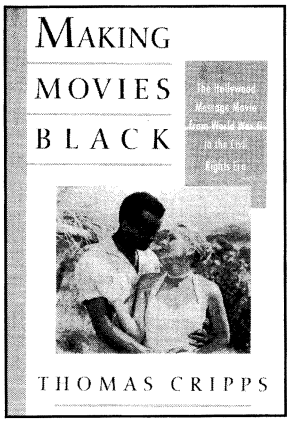

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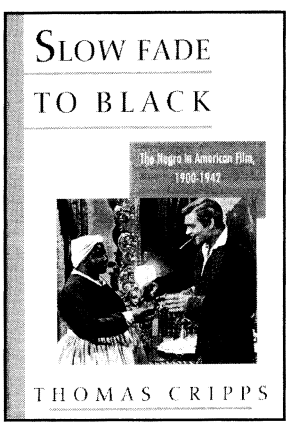

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Gregg Rickman

An Interview with Tim Hunter

Between 1982 and 1986 Tim Hunter directed three lucidly observed films about youth and its problems: *Tex* (1982), the little-seen *Sylvester* (1985), and the controversial *River's Edge* (released in 1987). Together with his screenplay work on Jonathan Kaplan's cutting, bitter teenage-revolt *Over the Edge* (1979), they established Hunter's standing as a director who brought at once a fresh approach and a classical sensibility to sensitive material. He modeled his work on the best of classical cinema, and his handling of themes that were potentially either too sentimental, or too callous and brutal, was refreshingly clear-eyed and nuanced.

After *River's Edge*, however, Hunter, afflicted by bad agents and bad luck, disappeared from cinemas, and in the succeeding years he found work only in episodic television and in three rather unpromising feature-length efforts. The first of these was a formula suspense film, *Paint It Black* (1988), that Hunter was brought in to rescue in mid-production but that still went straight to video. This was followed by the pilot for the teenage soap "Beverly Hills 90210" (1989), and a made-for-cable melodrama, *Lies of the Twins* (1990). The films do prove Hunter's craftsmanship: *Paint It Black*, a dull thriller, was probably irredeemable going in, but the "Beverly Hills 90210" pilot is not the disastrous self-parody one might fear, and *Lies of the Twins*, despite its contrived identical-twin plot mechanics, poses some interesting questions about the nature of its female protagonist's sexual identity. In addition to this work, Hunter also contributed three strong episodes to David Lynch's "Twin Peaks," as well as directing episodes of "Falconcrest," "Eerie, Indiana," and CBS's late-night program "Dark Justice." However, a career as a hired gun in the anonymous precincts of television does not seem an ideal fate for a director best suited to focusing his classically trained eye on the large screen.

Now Hunter has completed a new feature, *The Saint of Fort Washington,* a low-key drama about two homeless men in New York. It would be pleasant to report the rebirth of a major artist—as Hunter, after *River's Edge*, seemed to be. But this is difficult, as the project's virtues lie in its very modesty and reticence. Yet, in a way, these qualities were also the great virtues of Hunter's masterpiece: in *River's Edge*, Hunter lucidly stared down the entreaties of its glum or charismatic madmen in favor of a reasoned endorsement of sanity, modesty, love, and sorrow. In the new film, the calvary of a homeless schizophrenic (played by Matt Dillon) who performs ambiguous miracles becomes the occasion not for display pieces by Dillon and his costar, Danny Glover, but instead for generous ensemble playing against the grim but never lurid backdrop.

In short, Hunter seems best suited to small films on Big Themes, to paraphrase Chabrol. Hunter's homely virtues, his balanced compositions, his reticent camera movements, his low-key observation of extreme scenarios, may stand the test of time better than the more self-aggrandizing work of so many of his contemporaries.

Interviewing Hunter, as I did late in the editing of *The Saint of Fort Washington*, was enlightening. Clear

At the mercy of good material:
Tim Hunter on the set of
The Saint of Fort Washington

in his allegiance, as he made clear in our talk, to a classical style of film-making and certain great names in film history, he remained for all that intent on disclaiming an *auteur* role for himself. He was instead the very model of a harassed professional—harassed in this case by a studio executive intent on deleting two of his film's finer grace notes. Hunter's evident bitterness about this, and the rocky course of his career after *River's Edge*, is hidden on the one hand by the same sort of Hollywood professionalism that led John Ford to ridicule claims of his importance, and on the other by a genuine modesty that has probably handicapped him throughout his career.

A neon sign on display early on in *Paint It Black* warns us away from making claims for Hunter's films with a brightly flashing "Not Art." Hunter's work as well as his conversation seems almost to disclaim great ambitions. The one working artist he presents, the metal sculptor in *Paint It Black*, prefers to call himself a welder. Dillon's character, Matthew, in *The Saint of Fort Washington* is a photographer who wields a camera with no film. And the teens in Hunter's earlier work are almost as silenced as this mute artist. Hunter, in short, seems less interested in the articulate and successful than the inarticulate and marginalized.

Hunter was raised in a left-wing, socially conscious family. His father, screenwriter Ian McLellan Hunter, fronted for Dalton Trumbo on the original story for *Roman Holiday* and was later blacklisted himself. (Hunter points out that despite Trumbo's authorship of the treatment, his father did indeed write the final screenplay.) Hunter, exiled with his parents in Mexico and then in New York, grew up with blacklistee kids as his friends. He attended Harvard (1964–1968) as an English major, and then was part of the first class of The American Film Institute's Center for Advanced Film Studies. He went on to teach film history at the University of California at Santa Cruz, and began working on screenplays. With one of his students, Charlie Haas, he cowrote his first produced script, *Over the Edge*, which grew out of the true story of a criminal rampage among junior-high-school kids in a planned community. It was directed by Jonathan Kaplan, a childhood friend and, like Hunter, the son of blacklistees. The theme of loyalty to one's friends runs through Hunter's work, even surfacing as a major plot point in the "Beverly Hills 90210" pilot. That theme was the basis of my first question.

Interview

GREGG RICKMAN: *There seems to be a recurring theme of secrets and loyalty in your work. Does this go back to your father's experience in the blacklist era?*

TIM HUNTER: I'm not much on thematic consistency—I've been happily at the mercy of good material wherever I've found it. The theme was resonant to me where it occurred.

It comes up in River's Edge.

Because the picture was about the dilemma of informing—some of the paradoxes contained in the positions held by the characters—I did think about it. Certainly I grew up with the feeling that the blacklisted people were heroes and the informants were stool pigeons. I was rather pleased that the moral edge in *River's Edge* was so much more ambiguous.

In terms of applying my teen pix to my own life, I think teenagers live life very intensely and their emotions are very raw and uncompromising. [In high school] I shared that intensity of feeling. What is important is loyalty to your friends and lovers—I felt strongly then that I never wanted to compromise those ideals, and I still do. In the teenage stuff I've written and directed I've tried to capture that intensity.

Was there a similar sort of feeling at the AFI?

Not really. The AFI was not an ideal situation in those days. It purported to offer a great deal of freedom, but the political reality of the place was very different: George Stevens, Jr. seemed to run it as a PR front to perpetuate his own reputation in Hollywood and Washington.

Some of the fellows—Terry Malick, Jeremy Paul Kagan—were able to use the AFI as a smooth stepping stone into Hollywood. For others it was a real loss of innocence. A lot of us were involved in the critical studies program, which was axed in the second year. Paul Schrader led a protest movement about that.

What was your early interest in movies?

I was certainly a film enthusiast. I started going to films when I was about six. Running a film society at Harvard in the mid-1960s, I booked three films a week—I was able to show virtually everything.

It was a very exciting time to be interested in film, because of the New Wave and because of the *auteur* movement, which had just taken hold in New York, promoted by Andrew Sarris and Peter Bogdanovich. It was a time of reevaluation, a movement away from the well-made "classics" to an appreciation of genre pictures that reflected the identity of the film-maker. I went off to college shaped by this. In college I did a lot of student film-making. I floated it on my own, with the aid of a 16mm Bolex I inherited from the film society. I took one 8mm film workshop class. Because of the student films I made, I hooked up with WGBH and got a grant for more film-making in 16mm, and that led me to the AFI.

Did you see yourself as an auteur *then?*

I think I did, but the big failing of my student films was the writing. I still subscribe to the *auteur* theory—for other people.

Do you see yourself as an auteur *today?*

No. I haven't generated enough of my own screenplays.

But auteurism *celebrated directors who established their identity not with their screenwriting but with their camera placement, their mise-en-scène.*

I don't think directors are that self-conscious about camera placement. I see myself increasingly as a freelancer, as somebody with a strong take on material. I don't look for stuff that fits a preconceived notion. But you can't describe yourself as an *auteur* if you're not actively generating your own material. Honestly, I just look for good, rich stories.

Do Over the Edge, Tex, *and* River's Edge *play as a trilogy about teenagers for you?*

It's instructive to see the way people get typed in this business. *Over the Edge* took a couple of years to do. It was the first thing I ever sold. In researching that project and talking to hundreds of kids, I found that the only author they liked to read was S. E. Hinton. Now I happened to go to an ABA [American Book Association] convention because Charlie and I did a novelization of the *Over the Edge* script, and while there I stopped by the booth for Hinton's publisher, and they gave me a copy of her new book [*Tex*] in galleys. I liked it much the best of her books for adaptation purposes. There was a new regime at Disney pictures; my brother-in-law was a story editor there, and I brought the book into Disney through him. I was able to talk the studio into letting me direct it.

The rebellious teenagers of *River's Edge*

One project leads into another. After *Tex* I did *Sylvester* [a girl-and-her-horse story]. After that, I thought the last thing I wanted to do was another film about kids. But my next picture was *River's Edge*.

The only thing I can think of is that *Tex* and *River's Edge* deal with questions of moral and other major choices. The people in those pictures have to choose. If you choose one thing you often lose something else. That's just the way life is.

Your style is one of loose long takes in Tex, *and it seems more expressionistic in* River's Edge. *Is that very deliberate?*

I'm not that conscious of it. Hitchcock influenced me in a fairly obvious way, but it was really Preminger and Lang who influenced me the most. I do like Lang's way of pulling back on a dolly with a camera, and Preminger's roving, eye-level camera and precise moves. There's a crane shot in *The Saint of Fort Washington* that I consciously modeled after Preminger— the shot that comes down the Washington Bridge to Rosario [Matthew's friend, played by Rick Aviles] and then into traffic.

I almost invariably find myself looking at Renoir films when I'm about to make a new film. For *River's Edge* I looked at *Toni* and a few other of his films in that vein. I was trying to capture a certain kind of realism and humanity within the melodrama format. I always like Renoir in those genre pictures, like *La Nuit de carrefour*. For *The Saint of Fort Washington,* I looked at *The Lower Depths*, which has such wonderful close-ups, and also Frank Borzage's *Man's Castle*. I talked to [cinematographer] Frederick Elmes about doing intense close-ups on *The Saint of Fort Washington*. Fred's a funny guy. He'll always tell you he wants to do intense close-ups, but on the set you can't get him to move the goddamn camera past the chest.

You worked with Elmes on both River's Edge *and* The Saint of Fort Washington.

He likes directors who talk to him, work things out up front in detail even if you don't always adhere to it on the set.

How about some of your other cameramen?

On *Tex* I had Ric Waite. I chose him because I liked his work so much in *On the Nickel* and *The Long Riders*. He turned out to be a stinker to work with, a real egotist, and very condescending to me because it was my first picture. He advocated a lot of setups I didn't need or want, but his crew was fast so I was able to get everything I needed.

You have this wonderful long-take sequence in Tex, *after Tex has been shot and he makes a phone call for help.*

Thank you. Even Ric was pleased to do *that* shot. I almost had a chance to do one on *The Saint of Fort Washington*, which would have complemented that take in *Tex*, because it would have been Matt Dillon alone talking on the phone with his father. Unfortunately, the studio insisted on doing the scene with Dillon actually meeting his father in person on the street—I had just wanted to hold on Matt while he talked, to stay inside Matt's emotions. We cast an actor as Matt's father, shot the scene, and discarded it immediately. The studio never mentioned it again.

Had this happened before to you?

I had freedom on *Tex*. Disney liked the script, liked the rushes. I cut it and they sent my cut right to the theaters. Also on *Sylvester*, with Ray Stark [as producer]—except that Melissa Gilbert wasn't the best casting. I would have preferred an unknown actress, but Gilbert was more of a name from her TV work. It was my cut, however.

Hemdale didn't interfere with *River's Edge* either. When you're working for a studio which is making a big-budget film, and you're doing something much smaller, sometimes you just sneak in under the wire without attracting much attention. *River's Edge* only cost $1.8 million. Hemdale hardly bothered with it. *At Close Range* and *Made in USA*, Kenny Friedman's picture, were driving them nuts at the time. They cost $6 million. The studio left me alone.

What happened after River's Edge*? How did* Paint It Black *come about?*

I was dead broke. I got a call from my agent asking me if I wanted to take over a picture where the director had been fired in mid-production. It was a Hitchcock-formula ripoff modeled after *Strangers on a Train*. I came in on two days' notice, vainly thinking I could rewrite it as we shot. It was like doing a jigsaw puzzle, because I wound up using nine minutes of the first director's footage, mostly master shots. It was fun to shoot, and there are probably a couple of good scenes in it, like Sally Kirkland's murder. I considered it my *film maudit*, a rare chance to do a Grade C movie and not suffer too much for it.

Why were you broke? River's Edge *was well received.*

River's Edge got excellent critical response, and did good business in relation to its budget, but my agents at CAA were embarrassed by it and felt they couldn't show it to anyone at the major studios. I think they thought it was too dark. I didn't work for two years after finishing it, and discovered I'd been typed as the "darkest" director in town. I took *Paint It Black* to pay the bills. And then I got a new agent.

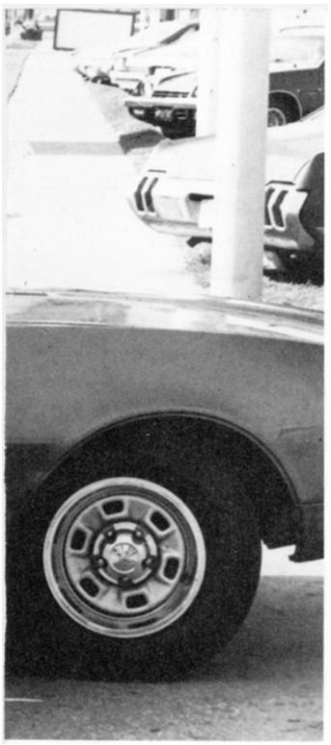
Tex (Matt Dillon, right) leaves Lem (Phil Brock) in the car to phone for help

How did the "Beverly Hills 90210" pilot come about?

Aaron Spelling offered it to me out of the blue. I thought it was a very good script of its type—in its own superficial way it was extremely likeable. I liked doing it enormously. Casting it was very tough. A director never has casting approval on TV. You bring in your top two or three people for each part, and 20 executives look them over in a room and decide. I haven't heard from any of those people since the day Fox picked up the show. In interviews they all go out of their way to badmouth the pilot, but I was pleased with it and it certainly did the job. I've been told TV's a producer's medium, and once Fox picked up the series they had to have a new guy in charge—who certainly didn't want to give any credit to anything anyone had done before he came on. Fuck 'em all.

What about Lies of the Twins*?*

I kind of enjoyed the trashy script, but it was not much fun to shoot. It was based on a Joyce Carol Oates book [*Lives of the Twins*], written under her genre



pseudonym [Rosamond Smith]. I went back to the book and put back in certain things that weren't in the first script, tried to take it seriously as an adaptation. It took 22 days to make, two days over schedule, an unpardonable sin in the TV business. These TV movies aren't one thing or another—not a pure TV form like an episode, which I like, and certainly not a feature. It's good trash, though, with Sirkian themes.

How did you come to direct "Twin Peaks"?

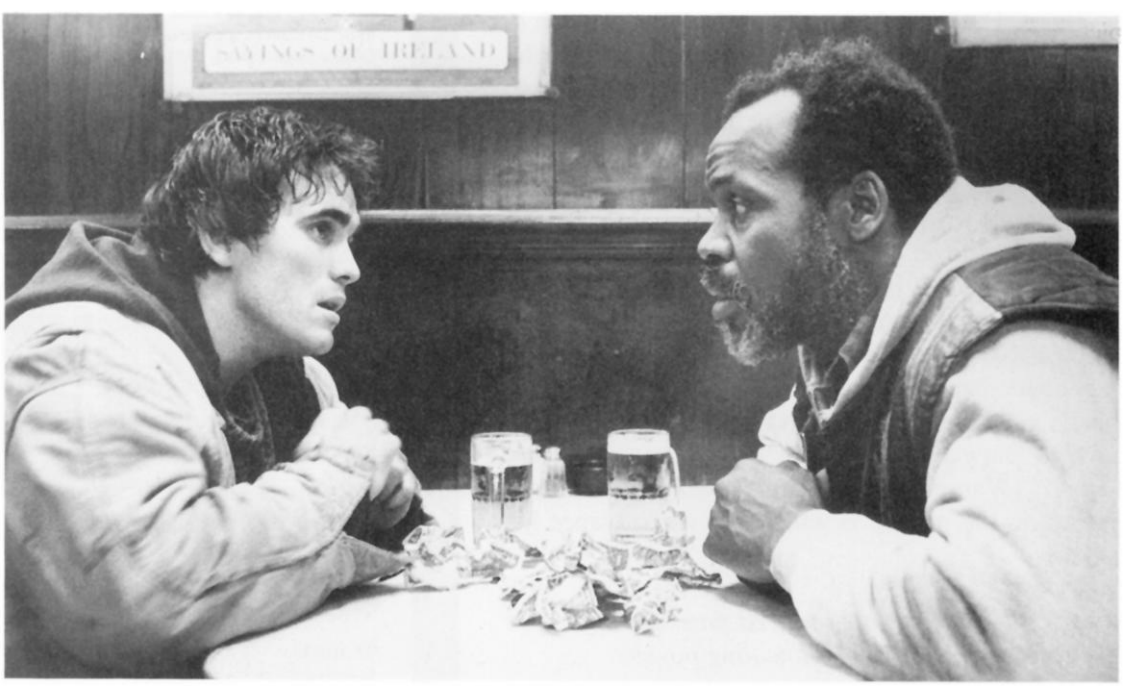
I was friendly with David [Lynch, from the AFI]. [When ABC bought Lynch's pilot for the series] I found out David and Mark Frost were looking for directors. They liked the work I'd done. For them, I think, I had a kind of lucid story sense. They used me either to set up a Lynch episode, or bat cleanup for Lynch, tying up loose ends and keeping the story line clear. The episode I directed when Leland [Palmer, the show's villain] dies under the police-station sprinklers was probably my best work since *River's Edge*.

I went back at the end of the [last] season to do the next-to-the-last episode, because I liked the people so much. The scripts had gotten pretty bad. Kyle MacLachlan, a wonderful guy, was especially sarcastic and bitter about the whole thing.

The show had fallen prey to a certain kind of directorial overachieving, so I decided to do the next-to-the-last episode without any camera movement. I looked at *Tokyo Story*, put on my best Japanese/ "Falconcrest" style, and just tried to give David the cleanest episode possible to set up whatever extravagant finale he had in mind.

How did The Saint of Fort Washington *happen?*

An agent at my agency, Bauer-Benedek, sent me the script. I really loved it. The friendship between the characters was traditional but it wasn't a bullshit Capra-esque formula story. It was on the edge of being in turnaround at the Goldwyn Company. There was a long period of me yelling and screaming at my agents before I was able to get a meeting with the producer, David Picker, but after finally meeting him he put me on the project. A very responsible guy, he spent a number of years trying to get the picture made.



Friends: Matthew (Matt Dillon, left) and Jerry (Danny Glover) in *The Saint of Fort Washington*

I sent the script to Matt, and he liked it. Based on that package, Warners bought it and we went to work. Lyle Kessler [the screenwriter] and I went to New York to meet with Matt. In the middle of a story conference I was informed by Lyle that I was working off of a different version of the script from the one Warners had bought, a first draft, more hard-edged. Warners had actually bought a later version, which had been fairly substantially softened.

I tried in subtle and not-so-subtle ways to restore parts of the first draft, where Matthew decompensates and commits suicide after being brutalized by Little Leroy [a thug]. In the later version, Matthew dies defending another less fortunate client of the shelter. In preproduction I was able to shift it to him being knifed trying to escape from the shelter. David Picker was willing to let me shoot it both ways, but when we staged the murder scene it was clear the newer version *was* better than the suicide, and we used it.

At Warners we were assigned an executive named Lance Young—it was kind of like having Cujo as your exec. He was the one who became hysterical about shooting the telephone scene. In post-production, he and their executive editorial hatchet person, Dede Allen, insisted on chopping back all the transitions. It's led to a certain emotional diminution, but basically it's worked out O.K. Now I'm trying to fight them off to keep a couple of short scenes—one is a [low-key, gentle] scene in a truck between the two guys at night. At the preview it got a good sigh of sympathy from the audience. The scene before it has the biggest laugh in the picture, and the scene after it is dramatic, so by cutting it you have too rapid an emotional shift between the two. That's the kind of thing the guy would never consider.

The other scene he wants to cut is when Matthew photographs Rosario kissing his wife's stomach, and the Danny Glover character realizes he's using real film. Too slow. My prediction, since of course we have to give up something, is that we'll lose the truck scene, keep the Rosario scene. Honestly, the guy seemed to be only concerned with his job status. You try to discuss what's good for the picture and he starts screaming, "I have to show this picture to Bob Daley and Terry Semel!" [Warners executives] It looked like his only interest in the picture is whether it will advance his career.

Is Dillon a saint or what? At times his character even seems to have magical healing powers.

I take a secular view of it, buoyed up by the fact that great film-makers like Rossellini and Dreyer had delved into the area. What I like about the script is that he just does it, a temporary easing of pain through the laying on of his hands, in a couple of places. To me it represents the untapped potential of all disenfranchised people, which is the way I like it.

[Initially scheduled as a Christmas release in 1992, *The Saint of Fort Washington* was pulled from Warner's release schedule last year to allow a new score by a different composer to be laid on. Hunter says he is happy with this decision. He also reports that his prediction about the outcome of the editorial battles has come true—he won one and lost one. The film is scheduled to be released at the end of 1993. Hunter is now developing his own project, a mystery, based on *Murder at the Nightwood Bar,* by Katherine V. Forrest.]

■ Gregg Rickman teaches at San Francisco State University.

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Stephen Prince

The Discourse of Pictures

Iconicity and Film Studies

In its analysis of images, film theory since the 1970s has been deeply indebted to structuralist and Saussurean-derived linguistic models. Indeed, it would be difficult to overstate the depth and importance of this relationship. As Robert Stam has noted, "Semiotics in general, and film semiotics in particular, must be seen . . . as local manifestations of a more widespread linguistic turn."[1] To speak, for example, about "reading" a film, as many film analysts now do, irrespective of the critical methodology employed to generate the reading, is to index and emphasize this lineage. Like books, films are regarded as texts for reading by viewers or critics, with the concomitant implication that such reading activates similar processes of semiotic decoding.

But does it? To what extent are linguistic models appropriate for an understanding of how images communicate? Film theory since the 1970s has tended to place great emphasis upon what is regarded as the arbitrary nature of the signifier-signified relationship, that is, upon the purely conventional and symbolic aspect of signs. What this focus has tended to displace is an appreciation of the iconic and mimetic aspect of certain categories of signs, namely pictorial signs, those most relevant to an understanding of the cinema. This stress upon the arbitrary nature of semiotic coding has had enormous consequences for the way film studies as a discipline has tended to frame questions about visual meaning and communication.

Our purpose here is to examine some of these consequences and to see how well they square with the observable evidence about how viewers perceive and comprehend cinematic sequences. We will see that current film theory, tracing its lineage from Saussure, Althusser, and Lacan, has constructed accounts of the ways in which film transmits meaning that are, in certain important respects, counter to the observable skills, abilities, and reactions of real-world viewers. The viewer, as theorized in these accounts, differs substantially from his/her real-world counterpart. We shall emphasize some of these discrepancies in order to suggest a reorientation of theoretical focus. In short, a renewed attention to the iconic, mimetic nature of pictorial signs is warranted, so that our theories might become more sensitive to the unique, constitutive features of pictorial—as opposed to linguistic—modes of communication. (It is important to note that other currents exist in contemporary film theory. Pier Paolo Pasolini and Peter Wollen, for example, have offered analyses of cinematic signs that are inflected rather differently than the Saussurean-inspired accounts that this essay examines.[2] More than 20 years ago, Wollen stressed the importance of paying attention to the iconic aspect of pictorial signs. Borrowing from Charles

Peirce's triadic model of the sign, he argued that in cinema, iconic and indexical aspects are more powerful than symbolic, and he pointed out that semiologists have neglected the subject of iconic signs because they are biased in favor of conceptions of signs as arbitrary and symbolic.)

Let me state very clearly at the outset that this suggested reorientation is not intended as a substitute for the very real and necessary work on the role that culture plays in film spectatorship and interpretation. Culture-bound attitudes do indeed inflect the content of film narratives, along with their stylistic visualization, at the point of production and, again, through the inferences viewers draw from those narratives. The position this essay takes is not intended as a replacement either for the critical work of ideological analysis and interpretation, or for inquiries into how viewers' judgements about the nature of a social world depicted in film may be shaped by elements of cinematic structure. But, in the interest of conducting this kind of interpretive work, it is important to have a clear sense of where cultural variables do and do not enter into the production of meaning by the cinematic image. Only when we have a good understanding of those aspects of visual signification where culture plays a less determinative role are we likely to be able to construct a clear portrait of where it does play a role. Thus, this essay certainly does not argue against the role of cultural analysis in film interpretation, but it does attempt to suggest some reasons for caution when employing linguistic categories and models of cultural relativism in film analysis. It is not that there are no cases in which they might profitably be applied, but rather that there are some significant aspects of visual communication to which they probably *should not* be applied.

The Linguistic Turn in Contemporary Film Studies

To begin, it will help to briefly trace the linguistic influence on contemporary film theory, after which we may question whether it supplies an adequate account of images or even, in certain crucial respects, of language itself. It is well known that Saussure's account of the sign as having an arbitrary and unmotivated connection between its structural components has been directly taken over by many film theorists. As Philip Rosen has pointed out, "One effect of the argument for the basic conventionality of cinematic images was to open the way for a utilization of the ideal of difference in cinematic signification."[3] Stressing the signifier as a differential construction enabled film theory to emphasize communication as discourse, as a culture-bound activity, relative to and differentially patterned by the unique social worlds of diverse groups of interactants. Signs, whether linguistic or cinematic, were viewed as culturally instantiated: "Sign systems don't produce meaning outside of the social and cultural context from which they have developed."[4]

This concept of the sign enabled theorists to explicate many aspects of cinematic coding, from discrete optical devices like dissolves or wipes to more complex structures such as shot/reverse-shot cutting, subjective images, and other aspects of point-of-view editing. Viewing these devices as symbolic codes permitted theorists to emphasize the construction of cinematic discourse, that is, the deployment in film of an elaborate semiotic system whose address, and effects, could be comprehensible in Althusserian-Lacanian terms as the interpellation of subjects. Using a symbol system like language, in this view, entails being positioned—socially, ideologically—in and by the categories which that system has helped create. Thus film, like language, could be comprehensible as discourse, as the creation of apparent meaning where only true relations of difference prevail (due to the arbitrary nature of the sign and the consequent need for it to receive definition only in relation to what it is not, i.e., to all other signs). As Althusser and Lacan (and the film theory they inspired) emphasized, these deceptively real constellations of apparently fixed meaning could be an excellent site for ideology and for imaginary conceptions of the self to take root. Viewed as discourse, cinema assumed a symbiotic relationship with ideology, becoming an effective vehicle for its transmission. The work of film theory became increasingly focused on deciphering the ideology at work inside the cinema's deceptive and transparent appearance of reality. That appearance of reality was, furthermore, suspect for having ideological effects (e.g., naturalizing that which is historical or cultural, etc.) and for creating ideal and false subject unities.[5] Viewed in these terms, film history is the history of discourse, and the relation between film and the world is a matter of representational convention. As Stephen Heath has written, "That reality, the match of film and world, is a matter of representation, and representation is in turn a matter of discourse. . . . [I]n this sense at least, film is a series of languages, a history of codes."[6]

Furthermore, an emphasis upon differential and relational signifiers has entailed a denial, or, at best a

suspicion, of reference. If signs are arbitrarily related to what they represent, then meaning is at best provisional, at worst illusory or ideological. Representation which is non-arbitrary tends to be construed by film theory in terms of a relationship of identity between sign and referent, thus generating a dichotomy of arbitrariness/identity. Semiotic representation is either a matter of arbitrary coding or of identity and transparence, with the latter condition being construed negatively in terms of illusion and error. Identity is regarded as a deceptively false universal, as a part of what is sometimes called the ideology of the visual. "Reading encounters the text as a relation of difference not identity."[7] Taken a step further, this view regards empirical knowledge about the world as being thoroughly mediated by signs, as itself discourse. "The empirical . . . is not 'the real' but the product of the discourses of the dominant ideology."[8] Since the "real" embodies the false universals of ideology, the relations among cinematic signifiers tend to be seen as cultural (and therefore symbolic), rather than as iconic or mimetic. The spectator's understanding of the cinema is therefore explained as a matter of cultural conditioning and learning. "The spectator chains together the film's signifiers on a cultural grid of intelligibility—an ensemble of assumptions and presuppositions about the 'real'—into an account that makes the film socially intelligible."[9]

Note the assumptions here. Language imposes a system of relational distinctions upon the world, creating culture from the real. One makes entry into language, or, in Lacanian terms, into the Symbolic order, learning the culturally patterned distinctions and, in the process, being interpellated as a subject. Film is akin to language by virtue of employing relational, differential signifiers. Comprehension of the cinema, then, should likewise be predicated upon cultural conditioning, upon the apprehension of "cultural grids of intelligibility." But, as we will see, the spectator's understanding of cinematic images seems more immediately explicable in terms of mimetic, referential coding rather than via the chains of displaced, arbitrary, and relational meaning in prevailing theories. In other words, this understanding is more a matter of recognition than translation. We will return to this point. Moreover, iconic representation is appropriately understood in terms of degrees of resemblance rather than the all-or-nothing terms of arbitrariness or identicality. A photograph, for example, exhibits a higher degree of iconicity than a line drawing.

Transposed in film theory to units of cinematic structure, the Saussurean view of the sign as an arbitrary and, taken in isolation, meaningless unit has allowed current theory to construct an extended analogy with language. Although no one any longer searches for the filmic equivalent of such linguistic features as the period or the comma, the debt to Saussurean linguistics is apparent in the axioms that the connections between cinematic representation and the world are, in all important respects, a matter of historical or cultural coding and convention, that is, that filmic representation is a matter of symbolic rather than iconic coding and that a viewer, rather than perceiving a film, "reads" it.

Problems with Linguistic Relativity

We shall explore some discrepancies between these axioms and the observable evidence about how viewers perceive and process cinematic images. First, however, it will be helpful to discuss some reservations regarding the alleged arbitrariness of the linguistic sign and the uses to which film studies has put this concept. As Devitt and Sterelny have recently pointed out, emphasizing the sign as a relational entity, defined through relations of difference, presents a problem for meaning.[10] This emphasis fails to specify how meaning may arise or even how lexical borrowing from other language systems may occur. When speakers borrow terms from another language, they are often doing so in response to a perception that some thing or condition exists that needs a name, although at present it has none or is insufficiently labeled. In such a case, linguistic skills are deployed in response to non- or extra-linguistic perceptions, a condition which models of linguistic determinism have a hard time accounting for. Furthermore, rejecting reference, as Saussurean models do, mystifies language acquisition.

In a Saussurean view, where meaning is defined through relations of difference (e.g., Jonathan Culler's well-known view that understanding the color brown entails grasping the relation between brown and what it is not, i.e., all other colors), it is difficult to see how a child ever learns language. As Devitt and Sterelny note, "We want to say that a child begins by learning a minimal vocabulary and a few rudimentary syntactic rules. The child continues by extending these rules. On a structuralist picture of language, we cannot say this. Vocabulary does not remain constant across changes in the system. Each time the child changes the system, *everything changes*. Language learning cannot be represented as a cumulative process."[11]

Part of the problem here is that to specify meaning, one at times has to step outside the language system, and poststructural methodologies have been most unwilling to posit the possibility of doing this. In many accounts, one cannot get outside representation at all because it is, by definition, determinative of human thought and experience. It is commonly maintained that "there is no absolute moment without signs, without language, without, in other words, a whole host of mediations between seeing, experience, and knowledge."[12] Stephen Heath has noted that the referents of cinematic images exist only in discourse, as representations already constituted by history and culture. "The represented a discourse produces is grasped, realized, exists as such in the particular discursive process of representation, and it is this that needs first and foremost to be interrogated."[13]

This view—that pictorial representations and, beyond them, patterns of human and social organization are the expressions of discursive relations and positions—is a reformulation of the famous Whorf-Sapir hypothesis which suggested that radically different language systems might organize the world in unique ways for their users. The Whorf-Sapir hypothesis is a statement of extreme linguistic relativity, arguing for the influence of features of linguistic organization upon the perceptual habits of a community. It is a relativistic view because it argues against the possibility of semantic or perceptual universals. As languages vary, so do the realities they construct. The Whorf-Sapir hypothesis has been a very seductive and influential one for film studies. Bill Nichols has noted the relevance of this hypothesis for poststructural film theory. "Post-structuralist work does not regard language or, by extension, film as the neutral means by which we understand ourselves, others, and our world. Rather, it draws on versions of the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis, which describes a world constructed in, by, and through language."[14]

Benjamin Lee Whorf's study of Indian languages led him to emphasize how different languages may segment the world for their community of speakers in divergent ways.[15] There are some data to support a limited view of this hypothesis.[16] Language undoubtedly does modulate our experience of the world. Yet there is little evidence to support the extreme relativity of the Whorfian view (i.e., that language determines both thought and perception) and some clear evidence to counter it.[17] Advocates of linguistic relativity, or discourse relativity, often support their position with reference to color terminology, i.e., to the fact that different cultures have varying numbers of color terms to designate locally important attributes, such as snow for an arctic community. In suggesting that representational images, like other texts, rely upon culturally determined codes, Nichols, for example, has employed this notion of linguistic relativity, writing that "to not know the perceptual codes maintained by a given culture is tantamount to being an illiterate infant wandering through an unintelligible world. (An example would be the utter inability of most members of non-Eskimo cultures to distinguish the dozens of different kinds of snow for which the Eskimo has separate words)."[18] Analogously, Mas'ud Zavarzadeh has asserted that "we understand colors not because we respond to them directly through our sensory organs, but because the responses of our sensory organs are made meaningful for us by the language. Different languages make sense of this physical continuum in startlingly different and dissimilar ways. . . ."[19]

In contrast to the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis, however, a classic crosscultural study of color terminology found respondents plotting the same range of basic colors on a Munsell color chart irrespective of the labels furnished by their culture.[20] Experimental data were obtained from speakers of 20 languages and were supplemented with historical information on 78 additional languages. The researchers found a universal inventory of 11 basic color categories across all languages studied and a fixed evolutionary sequence governing the order in which languages added new basic color categories. Writing that the allegation of arbitrariness in the way languages segment the color spectrum is "a gross overstatement," the researchers concluded that "the referents for the basic color terms of all languages appear to be drawn from a set of eleven universal perceptual categories, and these categories become encoded in the history of a given language in a partially fixed order. There appears to be no evidence to indicate that differences in complexity of basic color lexicons between one language and another reflect perceptual differences between the speakers of those languages."[21] Different languages can make more or fewer distinctions according to environmental or cultural needs but cannot override the biological basis of color perception.

The evidence furnished by Berlin and Kay on color terminology fails to support the extreme linguistic relativity hypothesis that has been so influential for film studies, and suggests instead the importance of retaining a concept of referentiality outside language to which language may respond. This example can be a heuristic one for film theory. Reopening a space for principles of referentiality and iconicity could be a very

useful development, enabling our theories to move closer to observable real-world evidence about how viewers understand the cinema. Thus, with respect to pictures, film theory might ask if there is a nonlinguistic, even biological, basis on which visual communication might rest. Investigation of this question may help provide a more secure sense of the methodological limits constraining the equation of cinema with discourse. Julian Hochberg has recently made this point, noting, "only when we know where the line lies that separates . . . lower, mandatory cognitive processes from the higher, elective functions, can we sensibly formulate explanations—linguistic, psychoanalytic, and so on—that rest on cultural determination."[22]

One final point to note about the concepts of linguistic relativity and arbitrariness operative in current film theory is the extent to which accounts of the cinema as discourse, analogized with language, construct the analogy based on limited features rather than seeing language in more comprehensive terms. The linguist Charles Hockett, for example, seeking to distinguish human language from animal systems of communication, formulated a set of 13 design features uniquely characterizing human language.[23] Arbitrariness of the sign was only one of them, and many of the others, such as prevarication, displacement, and abstractness, point to clear differences between the communicational capabilities of language and pictures, suggesting that analogies with language may not be the best way of explicating pictorial communication. The design feature of displacement, for example, denotes the capability of the language-system to create messages that refer to a time and space outside of the immediate communicational situation. Pictures, by contrast, lack tense and other aspects of syntax that can be used to establish remote temporal or spatial conditions (the dissolves, wipes, and odd music used to signal flashbacks in Hollywood narratives are a less powerful and flexible means of approximating this ability). Furthermore, as several scholars have pointed out, pictures cannot express negatives.[24] These and other differences between pictorial and linguistic messages point toward distinctly different communicational modalities. Interestingly, Christian Metz also noted some of these fundamental distinctions between linguistic and pictorial modes of communication. He pointed out that cinema lacks the double level of structure in language (i.e., the morphemic and phonemic levels) and is a one-way system of communication, unlike language, where senders and receivers are interchangeable, and he concluded, therefore, that the concept of a language is probably inapplicable to film. Despite these objections, Metz nevertheless went on to explore film structure as *parole*, in terms of a taxonomy of segment types.

If cinematic meaning is to be developed from a theoretical basis originating with a Saussurean conception of the relativity of the sign, film theory sometimes seems a little imprecise about the functional and at times invariant nature of communicational rules. As noted, film theory tends to view cutting patterns, camera positions, even perspectivally based images as culturally relative yet syntactically precise conventions. But, with respect to language (and perceptual images), Noam Chomsky points out that "having acquired the system of language, the person can (in principle) choose to use it or not, as he can choose to keep to or disregard his judgements concerning the position of objects in space. He cannot choose to have sentences mean other than what they do, any more than he can choose to have objects distributed in perceptual space otherwise than the way they are."[25] In other words, if the assumptions of the Saussurian view, as applied to pictures, are correct, we should find more crosscultural variation on basic picture recognition tasks than we in fact do. We will explore this point in more detail shortly.

Visual Grammar or Narrative Context?

Chomsky's observation raises the issue of grammaticality, which should be central to questions about whether film structure operates like a language. As noted, Metz's presentation is somewhat ambiguous with respect to grammaticality, but this is an issue that cannot easily be avoided for accounts that seek to analogize film and language. Film theory has identified a number of syntactic elements (e.g., point-of-view editing employing perspectivally based images, suture) which are thought to operate as codes with discernible effects across a range of individual films, thus constituting a kind of cinematic grammar. But the test of ungrammaticality is not often applied (that is, judgements about the syntactic correctness of given filmic constructions). The most thorough and complete exploration of the application of linguistic principles to problems of film structure is found in the work of John Carroll, who has sought to apply Chomskian transformational-generative grammar to the cinema.[26]

Carroll identifies a series of principles underlying cinema grammar violations of which ostensibly constitute cinematic equivalents of grammatical errors and

allegedly give rise to sequences that viewers will judge to be confusing or unfilmic. These are essentially continuity editing rules, such as the injunction that if an actor looks and reacts to anything off-frame, the next shot will be interpreted by viewers as a subjective shot. Carroll describes a sequence from *The Birds* where Hitchcock seems to violate this principle, and he remarks that viewers will find this confusing. It is the scene showing Tippi Hedren waiting outside the schoolhouse while, behind her, the birds gather en masse on the playground jungle gym. Hitchcock cuts between a shot of Hedren looking off-frame and a shot of the gathering flock, as if to imply (by virtue of the cutting pattern) that she must see it.

In a recent and thorough review of the issue of visual literacy in film and television, Messaris points out that, while Carroll is technically correct, the salient point is that the confusion (not shared by all viewers) is only momentary, because the surrounding contextual-narrative information makes it clear that the subsequent shot is not a subjective one.[27] In other words, given the narrative context, it would be implausible to assume the character sees the birds without reacting because their deadly nature has already been established in the story. Messaris points out that one reason why notions of grammaticality are difficult to apply to film is that narrative context often overrules code. "The role of formal conventions in conveying a movie's meaning is generally subordinate to conventional standards of plausibility or probability ('conventional' in the sense that the film-maker must be able to assume them of her/his audience). . . . [T]he viewer's interpretation of edited sequences is largely a matter of cross-referencing possible interpretations against a broader context (i.e., the larger story in the movie itself, together with corresponding situations from real life and other movies), rather than a matter of 'decoding' formal devices (e.g., an off-screen look followed by a cut to a new shot). . . . Interpretation is driven by the narrative context, not the code."[28]

Another example should make this clear, although this instance does not involve an alleged violation of grammar. In *The Searchers*, after Ethan and Marty discover that Lucy has been killed by her Indian abductors and Brad, her lover, is killed while charging into the Indian camp, the searchers ride into a snowy landscape where Marty despairs of ever finding Debbie. Ethan, in reply, makes his famous speech about being a critter that just keeps coming. Fade out and fade in on the Jorgensens' ranch as Ethan and Marty ride up. As a symbolic pictorial device that has no clear analogy in real-life visual experience, the fade operates in accord with its conventional usage to bracket and separate sections of the narrative, assisting the viewer's parsing operations. But it is the contextual narrative information that provides the salient cues about the precise nature of the narrative shift. At the Jorgensens', Ethan and Marty inhabit a different landscape. The absence of snow indicates a seasonal shift, and Jorgensen tells Ethan that his letter about Brad's death arrived the previous year. The viewer's extra-filmic knowledge of seasonal patterns and, most importantly, the dialogue between Ethan and Jorgensen establish the precise nature of the time shift in a way that the purely visual code—the fade—cannot. The dominance of narrative context over code explains why it would be equally permissible—though not in a film of the 1950s—to signal the temporal shift with a straight cut. With redundant informational cues available in the narrative, the viewer should be able to follow the flow of events, permitting a degree of interchangeability in the use of codes. Thus, image patterns may not need to be as rigidly sequenced as the concept of a "grammar" might imply, and the ostensive violation of grammatical rules may carry less significance (for the viewer's interpretational abilities) than is sometimes thought, as the violations of the 180-degree rule in contemporary productions should indicate.

Empirical Evidence about Image Comprehension

The foregoing discussion has suggested that the linguistic orientation of film theory may not be the most efficacious for dealing with visual meaning or cinema structure. Currently, the discipline is undergoing some profound shifts as the Saussurean and Lacanian accounts are contested by alternative formulations advocating perceptually or cognitively based approaches. The cognitive turn in contemporary theory has opened a space for renewed appraisal of perceptual evidence that runs counter to notions of film as language and their logical consequence—that viewers must learn to interpret pictorial displays. Reviewing the results of empirical research on the perceptual and cognitive processing of visual images and narratives will help clarify some of the problems inherent in using concepts of arbitrary or relational signifiers to explain principles of cinematic meaning and communication.

Contemporary notions that film is analogous to a language are consistent with the speculations of film

theorists dating from virtually the beginning of cinema history. Boris Eichenbaum, for example, noted that "Film language is no less conventional than any other language. . . . Cinema has not only its 'language,' but also its 'jargon,' rather inaccessible to the uninitiated."[29] Béla Balázs suggested that, to be comprehended, the new "form-language" of cinema required of its viewers a new sensibility and understanding, without which novice viewers would be baffled.[30] However, to posit language-based modes of cinematic communication is to implicitly raise the issue of visual literacy by implying that a period of tutoring would be logically necessary in order to gain interpretive mastery of the cinematic vocabulary (learning, for example, that a subjective shot represents the view of the absent character or that the portions of an event elided by continuity editing nevertheless still occurred within the narrative). The assumption that untutored or inexperienced viewers would encounter difficulties making sense of unfamiliar images finds some apparent confirmation in the existing anecdotal reports of viewers' bewildering first-time encounters with motion and still pictures.[31] However, these difficulties are often due less to an inherent inability of naïve viewers to see the pictorial objects than to a first-time encounter with a novel recording surface (e.g., paper in the case of still pictures) or a culturally unfamiliar depth cue used to render an object in abstract terms (e.g., linear perspective suggesting a straight road in a line drawing). Moreover, even where anthropologists and field workers report difficulties with picture perception, respondents typically are able to integrate figure-ground relations rather quickly, resulting in correct picture perception.[32] Viewers who find picture perception completely impossible under any condition are quite rare and probably anomalous.

Convincing evidence about inherent human abilities to perceive pictures is available from a classic experiment in which the researchers prevented a child (their own) from birth from seeing pictures until the age of 19 months, when it began to actively seek them out.[33] The child learned his vocabulary solely through the use of objects and received no training regarding pictorial meaning or content. He was nevertheless able to recognize, when tested with a series of 21 two-dimensional line drawings and photographs, the series of pictured objects (people and things familiar in his environment). The researchers concluded that the results indicate the existence of innate picture perception abilities and that, if there are allegations of cultures or viewers lacking these, it cannot be a matter of not yet having learned the language of pictures.

Empirical research indicates that one basis for these innate abilities probably lies in the activation by pictures of perceptual skills (object recognition, depth perspective, etc.) developed in real-world experience, skills which are then transferred to pictures. Scholars have commonly emphasized that pictures replicate a series of monocular depth cues used in real-world experience for inferring information about the positioning of objects in physical space (e.g., overlap, texture density gradients, shading, and, in motion pictures, motion parallax).[34] Picture perception, then, seems clearly based on 3D spatial skills transferred to the 2D representation, and one would expect that the more complete the set of cues employed by the picture regarding the spatial layout of the depicted scene, and the more culturally familiar the depicted objects, the greater the ease of recognition. If naïve viewers can perceive still pictures, there is no logical reason for inferring that they would have difficulty doing so with moving pictures, especially since movies will supply the additional real-world depth cue of motion parallax.

But what about the role of culture in visual perception? As we have seen, culture-bound determinations are very important in language-based film theories which rely on arbitrary, relational signifiers. The move to empirical, perceptually based evidence might be unwelcome for linguistically based accounts of pictorial meaning because it can be seen as replacing cultural categories with biological (and therefore ideologically suspect) ones, and because it may suggest that pictorial and linguistic modalities are distinct from each other. With respect to the role of culture in picture perception, some evidence does exist for varying cultural susceptibilities to different visual illusions (the Mueller-Lyer illusion and the Sander parallelogram), perhaps due to variations in the physical environments of different cultures, but these do not seem to impact basic picture perception abilities.[35]

In a recent summary of the existing crosscultural research on picture perception, Deregowski suggests that relationships of culture, perception, and viewing abilities be conceptualized in terms of sets of contiguous and, at times, overlapping skills.[36] Real-world spatial experience may utilize 3D skills that 2D representations do not exploit, such as binocular disparity (using the differences in the images recorded by each eye as a means of inferring information about depth and distance). Many real-world perceptual skills, by contrast, do overlap with visual skills relevant for picture perception, and some may be influenced by varying patterns of cultural organization (e.g., as Segall et al. point out, respondents from plains or dense jungle

environments may demonstrate less sensitivity to linear perspective when used as a pictorial depth code). Finally, some pictures employ purely representational codes with no overlap in real-life experience (e.g., wipes in film or streaky lines used to represent speed in comics). Obviously, with this last category one might expect greater interpretational difficulties for naïve viewers, but not inevitably. As our example from *The Searchers* indicated, narrative contextual information may be used to connect separate images or events even when the optical transition employed is a more symbolic one.

What, then, does all of this imply about the need for a period of tutoring implicit in the film-as-language model? Quite simply, such a period should not be necessary for inferring narrative relations in standard movies (i.e., movies that do not create deliberate narrative enigmas, in contrast to movies like *Last Year at Marienbad*). Empirical research with naïve viewers (in most cases young children and, in one unique study, inexperienced adults) offers evidence that the use of specifically cinematic devices (or, as the film-as-language paradigm might term them, symbolic codes), such as montage, camera movement, or subjective shots, do not pose substantial interpretational obstacles for naïve viewers provided developmental requisites are met (i.e., that the viewers have developed sufficient real-world conceptual and cognitive skills that can be applied to the film or television medium). A brief review of some of this evidence will help clarify these points and will provide further evidence from which to question the theoretical and methodological efficacy of grounding film theory in conceptions of cinematic relationships involving arbitrary, unmotivated signs.

Young children's comprehension of an array of cinematic techniques was explored in a recent study by Smith, Anderson, and Fisher.[37] In one experiment, they showed three- and five-year-old children brief stop-animation video sequences that employed pans, zooms, and cuts to present a simple story. Another group of children saw the same stories in sequences with no editing or camera movement. When the children were invited to recreate the stories using the dolls and sets seen in the films, no differences in story comprehension were observed between the two groups, indicating that these film techniques seemed to pose few cognitive or interpretational problems for these young viewers. These were viewers who had seen television before. It is, however, the absence of age-related differences in their performance that is striking, especially in light of the hypothesis that these techniques should require medium-specific learning in order to be understood.

Because these sequences were relatively simple in structure (featuring only one pan, zoom, and cut), the researchers ran a second experiment with more complex visual presentations and longer visual narratives. Cinematic manipulations this time consisted of parallel editing to imply simultaneity of action, subjective shots representing a character's literal viewpoint, ellipses achieved through editing that deleted portions of a continuous event or action, and editing to imply a layout of contiguous spaces (e.g., cutting from an establishing shot of two buildings to a shot of a character looking out of a window, then to a reverse-angle interior shot of the character at the window). This time the children were four and seven years old.

As before, they were asked to recreate character perspectives and spatial layouts using the dolls and sets that had appeared in the films. Comparisons across all classes of montage indicated that clear majorities in both age groups made correct inferences of space, ellipsis, and character perspective. Inferences of simultaneity proved difficult for the four-year-olds, but not for the seven-year-olds. Both groups proved especially skilled at reconstructing implied actions omitted in the edited narratives.

This study indicates good comprehension by young children of basic montage techniques, which is what one would expect if interpretation of the visual displays draws on a child's developing real-world visual skills and experience. Emphasizing the status of cinematic images as iconic signs having a clear referential basis and inviting a transfer of real-world visual skills to the pictorial display does not deny the existence of medium-specific skills relevant for making sense of a motion picture, but it does reserve a more modest space for them than would the arbitrary-relational signifier model. Clearly, some film techniques are more symbolic than iconic and may be coded in a more arbitrary fashion. Such techniques would invite the viewer's application of specific, medium-based competencies. For example, the Smith et. al study employed parallel editing as one category of montage. Drawing the correct inference from parallel editing is arguably a medium-specific skill, and, as one would expect, the largest age differences in the average percentage of correct responses showed up there. But, rather than needing to become proficient at manipulating an arbitrarily symbolic set of cinematic signifiers, children can generally interpret visual displays involving point-of-view editing by transferring to the display their developing real-world visual skills and experience. Evidence supporting a developmental view of the application of real-world cognitive and perceptual skills

to film and television displays involving point-of-view editing is found in Comuntzis-Page's study of the relationship between children's evolving real-world perspective-taking skills and their ability to infer meaning from an edited video sequence.[38] She found that children who successfully demonstrated a knowledge of visual perspectives in actual 3-dimensional situations (e.g., children who knew that observers situated in different places can see different sides of a common object) were better able to understand the changing camera viewpoints of a television presentation. In fact, she found that skill at inferring character relationships in a 3-dimensional layout seemed to be a prerequisite for making the proper analogous inferences from the 2-dimensional video display. Only children who did well at the former task also did well on the latter, and clear age-related differences between perspective takers and nonperspective takers were found, supporting a developmental view.

The research cited thus far has used children to represent a population of relatively unskilled viewers. However, one unique study of motion picture perception and interpretation exists using adult viewers who had little familiarity with any mass media.[39] Working with a seminomadic, nonliterate, pastoral tribe in Kenya, a community whose aesthetic expressions concentrated on personal adornment and performance arts, the researchers showed adult villagers two videotapes of a culturally familiar story. One version was unedited, the other featured 14 cuts with frequent alterations of close-ups, medium shots, long shots, and zooms. No significant differences in ability to recall story information were found between respondents who viewed the edited and unedited versions. Fragmentation of the visual scene through point-of-view editing did not hinder comprehension, nor did it seem to require the use of any medium-specific skills. The researchers concluded that, on the contrary, continuity editing codes that manipulate point of view seem to function as "analogs of perceptual processes."[40]

Levels of Iconicity

The evidence reviewed thus far bears on the capability of pictures to furnish cues regarding the spatial layout of a scene or situation that are analogous to sources of information commonly found in real-world visual experience. It also bears mentioning, however, that another level of iconic information typically exists in pictures which is central to a consideration of the comprehensibility and emotional effects of the cinema. Photographic images of people necessarily reproduce that information about facial expression and gesture which Ray Birdwhistell has called "kinesics." Birdwhistell and his colleagues studied the systematic patterning of body motion within cultures and designed an elaborate notational system to transcribe and study the distinctively patterned strings of body motion cues (called "kines") that are situationally articulated as a communicative form in everyday life. Birdwhistell explicitly rejected the notion that language was the most important channel of communication, arguing instead for a conception of communication as a multimodal, multi-sensory process which included visual and gestural as well as auditory channels.[41] He demonstrated how body motions are culturally patterned in symbolically significant ways that are understood by members of a given community whose socialization processes have sensitized them to coded kinesic displays. While Birdwhistell emphasized the importance of cultural context in determining the encoding of specific kinesic patterns, other researchers have argued that some gestural expressions—those on the face, for example—may function as biologically based pancultural signals for emotion. While all cultures mandate display rules governing who may display which emotions and when, experimental evidence furnished by Paul Ekman and his colleagues has indicated that certain facial displays seem correlated with basic categories of human emotion and are capable of being recognized crossculturally.[42]

The obvious point to be made from this brief discussion of the work on facial and body motion communication is that the motion picture camera furnishes an excellent means of recording the expressive meanings carried by these channels. Birdwhistell, in fact, employed still photographs and motion picture footage to record and store the data used in his analyses. It should be an assertion of the obvious to point out that a major source of the appeal and power of the movies lies here, in film's ability to capture the subtleties and nuances of socially resonant streams of kinesic expressions, and not just to passively capture them but, via close-ups and other expressive devices, to intensify and emphasize the most salient cues for the viewer's understanding in cognitive and affective terms of the meaning of the scenes depicted on screen. (Recent studies of acting by James Naremore and Roberta Pearson have emphasized the way that different performance traditions code expressive behavior and how film technique may be used to frame and emphasize this coding.[43]) The relational-arbitrary signifier hy-

pothesis has tended to draw attention away from this clear source of iconic meaning in motion pictures, despite its obvious importance in helping to explicate the crosscultural appeal and power of the movies.

The Discourse of Pictures

What do these studies and avenues of research tell us about cinematic codes and the appropriateness of defining them, as current film theory does, as a series of relational differences among arbitrary signs? The empirical evidence clearly suggests that pictorial identification skills do not develop from an extended period of exposure to signification and consequent learning, as do language skills, and that this is probably due to the fact that most realistic pictures are isomorphic with corresponding real-world visual displays, unlike symbolic signs, which have a more arbitrary relationship to what they represent. Furthermore, via the technologies of motion picture recording, the camera is able to reproduce in clearly recognizable and even intensified form the familiar streams of facial and body motion cues which symbolically encode the meanings of the social situations portrayed on screen. These cues should be readily understood by cinema viewers, just as they are in real-world visual experience. If the distinctions between iconic and symbolic modes that we have been emphasizing are really relevant to differences between pictures and language, then one would expect iconic modes to be processed more readily than symbolic ones, especially by young children, and existing research lends support to this idea.[44]

Thus, it is not clear how the concept of the relational, arbitrary signifier might apply to cinematic images or, for that matter, to any iconic image. Certainly, as Hockett indicated, few communicational signs are completely iconic, since a state of total iconicity would imply that the sign was completely indistinguishable from its referent.[45] Nevertheless, pictorial signs do bear clear structural similarities to their referents, with the attendant consequences for perception and comprehension that we have just reviewed. The linguistic model has proven to be a very powerful paradigm for the analysis of images and larger film structures (e.g., dramatic scenes) in part because that analysis is typically conducted via words. When film scholars analyze images, visual information is translated into verbal description, one modality is substituted for another. But, as Branigan has noted, one must be cautious in speaking about the discourse of pictures: "The analyst must recognize that the very fact of talking about narration requires a re-presentation of it by verbal or other means which may capture only some of its features."[46] The concept of the relational, arbitrary signifier would seem most applicable to pictures here, in the language of analysis which is employed to intellectually manipulate pictorial representations. Furthermore, while empirical evidence indicates that viewers easily and readily make the required inferences necessary to sequence a series of pictures into a coherent narrative, even to the extent of inferring information about situations not directly pictured,[47] several scholars have argued that these inferences are organized on a conceptual and propositional—but not necessarily a linguistic—basis. Pylyshyn, for example, suggested that "Such concepts and predicates may be perceptually well defined without having any explicit natural language label.

Thus we may have a concept corresponding to the equivalence class of certain sounds or visual patterns without an explicit verbal label for it. Such a view implies that we can have mental concepts or ways of abstracting from our sense data which are beyond the reach of our current stock of words, but for which we could develop a vocabulary if communicating such concepts became important."[48] Linguistic models, in other words, are not requisite for explaining how we respond to and make sense out of pictorial information, nor even for describing how we encode visual information for longterm memory storage such that it can be subsequently reaccessed.[49]

As noted, arbitrary-relational signifier models are most applicable where the discourse being examined is language-based rather than strictly pictorial. In this respect, it follows that theories about ideology and ideological effects are best formulated not with regard to pictures sui generis (e.g., as has been done with perspective-based images) or with such machines for seeing as the camera and projector, but rather as a matter of the content of a given film and its modulation via techniques of cinematic style. As Noël Carroll has remarked, ideological design needs to be examined film by film, on an individual case-by-case basis. Because theories about linguistic structure do not seem to be directly applicable to pictures, they therefore form an insufficient basis for grounding a critique of cinematic discourse or the place of ideology in pictorial images.

Proponents of the application of the Saussurean lineage to cinema studies might reply that the poststructural attention to textuality and discourse as

culturally relative constructs provides a framework for investigating ideology and the cultural or political polyvalence of a given text. That the poststructural methodology works in this way is undoubtedly true. But, unfortunately, what tends to be displaced are issues of how cinema is able to communicate crossculturally (i.e., attain global popularity) and the even more basic questions of what makes the cinema intelligible to its viewers. Not all cultures organize libidinal and psychic energy in the same way, and one would not therefore wish to posit Lacanian categories as basic mechanisms explicating the means of cinematic communication. Yet all cultures currently studied do demonstrate clear pictorial and cinematic perception abilities. Moreover, these abilities are shared with a variety of animals.[50] Picture recognition abilities have been demonstrated across a wide range of nonhuman subjects—primates, birds, fish, reptiles, even insects. These include unlearned, spontaneous responses to still and motion pictures as well as responses that are the result of conditioning. Recognition of objects by nonhuman subjects has been demonstrated across different classes of pictorial media—black-and-white and color photographs, high-contrast photographs, film and videotape, even line drawings. Comprehension of filmed events has been elicited, as well as the formation and pickup of object-class concepts from pictures (e.g., as in the ability of pigeons, trained to recognize human figures in slides of various environments, to transfer this ability and the class concept of "human being" to sets of slides they had never seen before).

Positing arbitrary signifiers and unconscious processes of the mind seems to deflect the ability of cinema studies to grapple with some of the most basic questions about cinema, namely, how are viewers crossculturally able to make sense of the medium and what is the necessary biological basis of pictorial communication that makes it so effective for human and nonhuman subjects alike. As Noël Carroll has recently suggested, emphasizing the way that film structure works to secure the cognitive clarity of the experience for the viewer can give us a basis for explaining the attractiveness and appeal, and perhaps even the emotional power, of the medium.[51]

Furthermore, emphasizing the cinematic code as an arbitrary, unmotivated sign places film theory in the uncomfortable position of implying certain consequences for the real-world viewer that are contrary to the observable evidence, namely, that cinematic images should not function in ways that are isomorphic with their real-world counterparts, that viewers should have to learn the symbolic meanings of basic cinematic structure, and that, logically, because discourse is culture-bound, the appeal of the medium should be too. Film theory has dealt with these problems by pointing to the transparency effect of the cinema or to the illusionism of the photographic image based on what are regarded as the culture-bound and symbolic conventions of perspective. But, as this article has suggested, some important gaps and contradictions are found between these formulations, the Saussurean lineage, and the empirical evidence regarding pictorial recognition and visual communication. Unless film theory can reconceptualize the cinema as an iconic, rather than as a purely symbolic, mode of communication, it is difficult to see how these serious theoretical gaps may be closed. We need to recover a recognition of the analogical component of pictorial signs. Rather than dealing with this component in metaphorical terms (e.g., via transparency effects, subject positioning in the discourse of the Imaginary, or illusionism), an appreciation of the isomorphic relations between pictorial signs and their referents, and attention to the *differences* between pictorial and linguistic modes of communication, can help invigorate film theory by reconnecting it to the observable experiences of real viewers.

As noted at the beginning of this essay, the intention here is not to remove cultural considerations from questions about film viewing and interpretation. Culture clearly enters into the inferences viewers draw from cinematic images and narratives where meaning may be constructed in terms of the intellectual horizons provided by class, race, gender, and similar variables. But it has been the contention of this essay that culture plays a less decisive role at the level of comprehension discussed herein. Furthermore, only by knowing where cultural considerations shade off into what may be more properly termed physiological or cognitive capabilities are we likely to be able to apply cultural analyses in fruitful and relevant ways. This approach can help theory explicate the intelligibility and power of the movies in ways that are responsive to, and grounded in, the observable experiences of actual viewers.

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NOTES

My thanks to Carl Plantinga for reading an earlier version of this essay and offering helpful suggestions.

1. Robert Stam, "Film and Language: From Metz to Bakhtin," in *The Cinematic Text: Methods and Approaches*, ed. R. Barton Palmer (New York: AMS Press, 1989), p. 277.
2. See Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, ed. Louise K. Barnett, trans. Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) and Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), especially pp. 116–54.
3. Philip Rosen, ed., *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 3.
4. "Introduction," in *Explorations in Film Theory: Selected Essays from Cine-Tracts*, ed. Ron Burnett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. xv.
5. In the influential analyses of Jean-Louis Baudry, these functions are a consequence of the machinery of camera and projector, irrespective of the content and subjects that are filmed. See "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus" and "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema," in Rosen, ed., *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, pp. 286–318.
6. Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (New York: Macmillan, 1981), p. 26.
7. D. N. Rodowick, *The Difficulty of Difference: Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference and Film Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 138.
8. Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, *Seeing Films Politically* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. x.
9. Ibid, p. 11.
10. Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny, *Language and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 215–18.
11. Ibid, p. 216.
12. Burnett, *Explorations in Film Theory*, p. xvii.
13. Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, p. 191.
14. "Introduction," in *Movies and Methods,* vol. 2, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), p. 16.
15. The relevant essays explicating this position can be found in *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed. John B. Carroll (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).
16. See, for example, John B. Carroll and Joseph B. Casagrande, "The Function of Language Classifications in Behavior," in *Readings in Social Psychology*, ed. Eleanor E. Maccoby, Theodore M. Newcomb, and Eugene L. Hartley (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958), pp. 18–31. It should be noted, however, that the results of this study, while offering some support of the Whorfian view, are nevertheless mixed and somewhat inconsistent.
17. For a review of evidence bearing on strong and weak versions of Whorfian hypothesis, see Earl Hunt and Franca Agnoli, "The Whorfian Hypothesis: A Cognitive Psychology Perspective," *Psychological Review* 98, no. 3 (1991), pp. 377–89.
18. Bill Nichols, *Ideology and the Image* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), p. 26.
19. Zavarzadeh, *Seeing Films Politically,* p. 102.
20. Brent Berlin and Paul Kay, *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969).
21. Ibid., pp. 4–5.
22. Julian Hochberg, "The Perception of Moving Images," *Iris*, no. 9 (Spring, 1989), p. 41.
23. See Charles F. Hockett, "Logical Considerations in the Study of Animal Communication," in *The View from Language: Selected Essays 1948–1974* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1977), pp. 124–62.
24. Sol Worth, "Pictures Can't Say Ain't," in *Film/Culture*, ed. Sari Thomas (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1982), pp. 97–109, and Edward Branigan, "Here Is a Picture of No Revolver," *Wide Angle* 8, no. 34 (1986), pp. 8–17.
25. Noam Chomsky, *Reflections on Language* (New York: Pantheon, 1975), p. 71.
26. See John M. Carroll, *Toward a Structural Psychology of Cinema* (New York: Mouton, 1980).
27. Paul Messaris, *Visual Literacy: How Images Make Sense* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, forthcoming).
28. Ibid.
29. Boris Eichenbaum, "Cinema Stylistics," in *Russian Formalist Film Theory*, ed. Herbert Eagle (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1981), p. 77.
30. Béla Balázs, *Theory of the Film* (New York: Dover, 1970), p. 34.
31. See the accounts in Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, pp. 34–35, and J. B. Deregowski, "Real Space and Represented Space: Cross-Cultural Perspectives," in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 12 (1989), pp. 56–59.
32. Messaris also makes this point.
33. Julian Hochberg and Virginia Brooks, "Picture Perception as an Unlearned Ability: A Study of One Child's Performance," *American Journal of Psychology* 74, no. 4 (Dec. 1962), pp. 624–28.
34. Discussing these cues, David Bordwell points out that cinematic images also routinely distort or alter them (e.g., through the effects of different focal length lenses, etc.). David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 107–10.
35. See Marshall H. Segall, Donald T. Campbell, and Melville J. Herskovits, *The Influence of Culture on Visual Perception* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966).
36. Deregowski, "Real Space," pp. 69-72.
37. Robin Smith, Daniel R. Anderson, and Catherine Fischer, "Young Children's Comprehension of Montage," *Child Development* 56 (1985), pp. 962–71.
38. Georgette Comuntzis-Page, "Changing Viewpoints in Visual Presentations: A Young Child's Point of View," paper presented at Eastern Communication Association Convention, Baltimore, 1988.
39. Renee Hobbs, Richard Frost, Arthur Davis, and John Stauffer, "How First-Time Viewers Comprehend Editing Conventions," *Journal of Communication* 38 (1988), pp. 50–60.
40. Ibid., p. 58.
41. See Ray L. Birdwhistell, *Kinesics and Context* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970).
42. See Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen, "Constants Across Cultures in the Face and Emotion," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 17, no. 2 (1971), pp.

124–29, and Paul Ekman, "Expression and the Nature of Emotion," in *Approaches to Emotion,* ed. Klaus R. Scherer and Paul Ekman (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Association, 1984), pp. 319–43. The latter volume is especially useful for containing a range of theoretical positions, often competing, on the nature and expression of emotion and the ways it may be culturally coded.

43. See James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988) and Roberta Pearson, *Eloquent Gestures: The Transformation of Performance Style in the Griffith Biograph Films* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).
44. See S. L. Calvert, A. C. Huston, B. A. Watkins, and J. C. Wright, "The Effects of Selective Attention to Television Forms on Children's Comprehension of Content," *Child Development* 53 (1982), pp. 601–10, and D. S. Hayes and D. W. Birnbaum, "Preschoolers' Retention of Televised Events: Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words?," *Developmental Psychology* 16 (1980), pp. 410-16.
45. Hockett, "Logical Considerations in the Study of Animal Communication," p. 143.
46. Branigan, "Here Is a Picture of No Revolver," p. 11.
47. See Patricia Baggett, "Memory for Explicit and Implicit Information in Picture Stories," *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* 14 (1975), pp. 538–48.
48. Zenon W. Pylyshyn, "What the Mind's Eye Tells the Mind's Brain: A Critique of Mental Imagery," *Psychological Bulletin* 80, no. 1 (July 1973), p. 7.
49. However, with regard to certain categories of pictures—namely, relatively ambiguous ones—some evidence exists to indicate that linguistic cues may influence the recollection of details of pictorial form. See the classic study by L. Carmichael, H. P. Hogan, and A. A. Walter, "An Experimental Study of the Effect of Language on the Reproduction of Visually Perceived Form," *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 15 (1932), pp. 73–86, and the replication by W. C. H. Prentice, "Visual Recognition of Verbally Labelled Figures," *American Journal of Psychology* 67 (1954), pp. 315–20.
50. For a review of picture-perception research involving animals, see Patrick A. Cabe, "Picture Perception in Nonhuman Subjects," in *The Perception of Pictures*, vol. 2, ed. Margaret A. Hagen (New York: Academic Press, 1980), pp. 305-43.
51. Noël Carroll, *Mystifying Movies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

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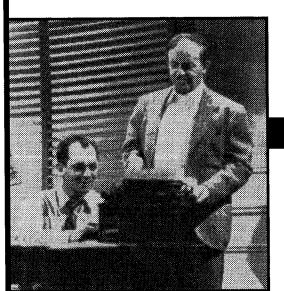

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Reviews

Jamón Jamón

Director: Bigas Luna. Producer: Andres Vicente Gomez. Writers: Cuca Canals, Bigas Luna. Cinematographer: José Luis Alcaine. Editor: Pablo del Amo. Music: Nicola Piovanni. Academy Entertainment.

Bigas Luna's *Jamón Jamón* (1992) opens with a stunning shot of a desolate Spanish plain seen through the silhouette of one of those gigantic black bull billboards (advertising Osborn brandy) that have long punctuated the Iberian landscape. Without a word being uttered (or printed), this sign brings to mind for most Spaniards not only the name of the product but also its well-known slogan, "Osborn es cosa de hombres" ("Osborn is a man's thing"). The shot is dominated by the bull's giant *cojones* looming over the foreground, slightly detached from the rest of the beast and making a strange creaking sound. This composition immediately tells us not only that the film will be blatantly phallocentric but also that it will go for big emotions which verge on parodic excess, perceptions that are strengthened when this traditional sign of Spanish machismo is rivalled by an equally giant post-Franco billboard with a crotch shot of sexy Samson-brand briefs.

Yet we soon learn that it is female desire that drives this fast-paced melodrama, for the hyperplotted narrative follows three beautiful sexual women over the top. First, there is young Silvia (Penelope Cruz), who works in the Samson factory cutting out patterns of the men's underwear; she has been impregnated by her boyfriend José Luis (Jordi Molla), the son of the factory owners who are the wealthiest family in town. Second, there is Silvia's loving, hardworking mother, Carmen (Anna Galiena), who, after having been abandoned by her drunken, abusive husband, became the town whore to support her three daughters; her lovers include both her prospective son-in-law José Luis and his businessman father, Manuel. And finally there is Silvia's arch antagonist, Conchita (Stefania Sandrelli), José Luis's seductive, devouring mother, who not only opposes the class-crossed match but even hires a handsome young hunk to lure Silvia away from her son. Conchita literally chooses the *cojones* of Raúl González (Javier Bardem), who is *not* a relative of Spain's ruling Felipe but a 22-year-old would-be bullfighter who delivers salamis and hams for Hernán Cortés's Los Conquistadores Company. She picks this over-determined Spaniard out of a line-up of desirable young studs who are auditioning for her company's jockey-shorts billboard, but she loses control of the "plot" when she fails to resist her own hired *jamón*. In this consumerist world of overblown, stereotyped images, it is hardly surprising that all three women have similar tastes. For that matter, so do the men. What is more surprising is that this film's sexy images, like the billboards, are clearly addressed to the erotic tastes of both genders.

As if acknowledging the current challenges to concepts of the nation, *Jamón Jamón* blatantly parodies several stereotypes of Spanishness, particularly those associated with sexuality. Mocking the sacred cult of masculinity that surrounds the bullfight, one hysterical scene shows José Luis literally attacking the fetishized *cojones* of the gigantic Osborn bull, which come crashing down from the sky. Ever the adaptive *bricoleur*, Silvia scoops them up and uses them as a shield against the drenching rain. In several scenes, the emotionally stunted men eagerly gnaw on the women's breasts (*tetas*), as if to recapture the pleasures of maternal plenitude and, as one of them puts it, to indulge their hispanic taste for Spanish omelettes (*tortilla española con jamón*). The film plays with the sexual implications of the pride Spaniards take in their gastronomic passion for garlic, which is used like an aphrodisiac, and for *jamón*, which comes in many varieties from the diverse regions of the nation (in fact, one of Spain's most popular retail chains of ham shops is called Museo de Jamón).

In addition to *cojones*, *tetas*, and these national gastronomic favorites, the film also plays with the fetishistic power of the shoe, which has been given a distinctive Spanish inflection worldwide by Buñuel's movies. Despite her emotional sincerity, Silvia longs to have a big closet totally devoted to footwear, a fetishistic fantasy of phallic empowerment that her rich archenemy Conchita has already fulfilled. This implies that Conchita's suspicions are not entirely wrong, for one of Silvia's motives for marrying José Luis is apparently to be in the expensive shoes of his phallic mother. This shoe fantasy derives as much from Hollywood consumerist melodramas like *Written on the Wind* and *Vertigo* (where Technicolor luxury is a turn-on) as from Buñuel's perverse parodies of this genre like *El* and *That Obscure Object of Desire* (where the ideological implications of these erotic obsessions are deconstructed).

In *Jamón Jamón,* this exaggeration of the shoe fetish is part of the broader parody of the eroticizing

power of consumerism—a theme that was also central to Bigas Luna's earlier film, *Bilbao*. In the first comical sex scene between Conchita and Raúl, where she successfully gets a rise out of his limp penis with the promise of a new Yamaha 600 motorcycle, the film even borrows a specific fetishistic shot from *Bilbao*: a downward-angle shot of the rutting couple with her black-and-white high-heeled pumps provocatively jabbing into the foreground.

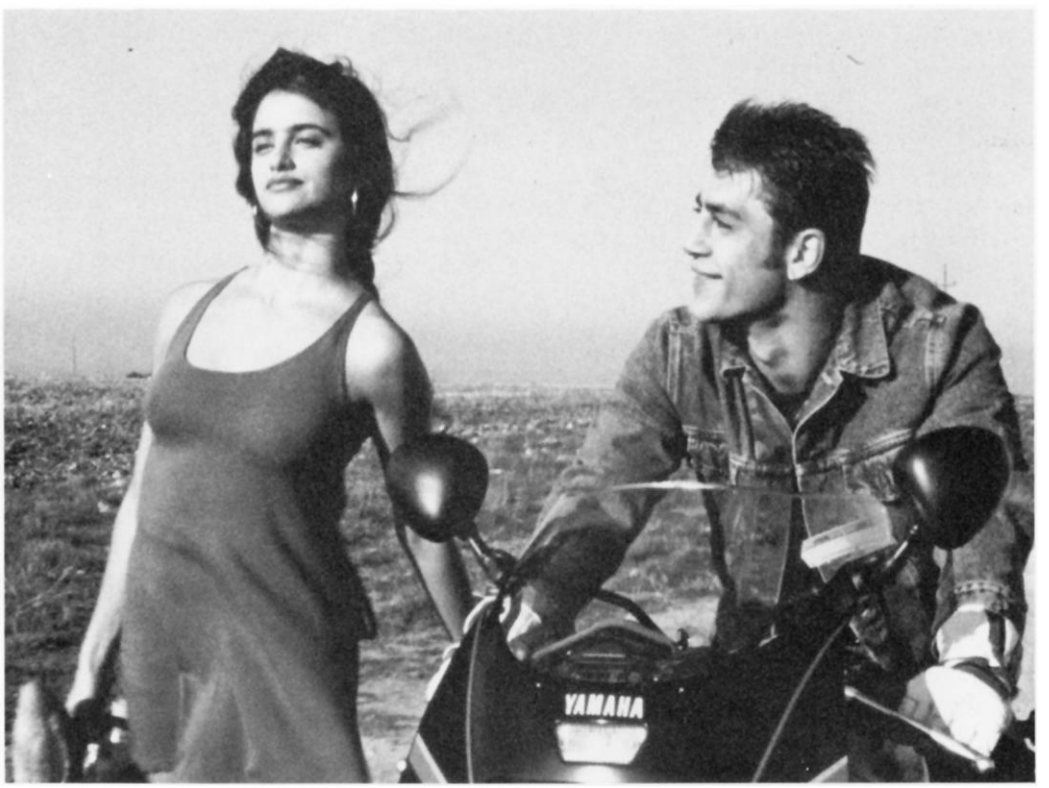
As in previous films by Bigas Luna, the process of fetishization is stylistically dependent on a heavy use of huge, fragmenting close-ups. Yet these extremely close shots also cultivate the kind of ironic distance that is usually associated with long shots—a strategy of disruptive perspective that Ortega y Gasset (in the context of modernist literature) has called "infra realism."

> Reality can be overcome, not only by soaring to the heights of poetic exaltation but also by paying exaggerated attention to the minutest detail. The best examples of this—of attending, lens in hand, to the microscopic aspects of life—are to be found in Proust, Ramón Gómez de la Serna, and Joyce.[1]

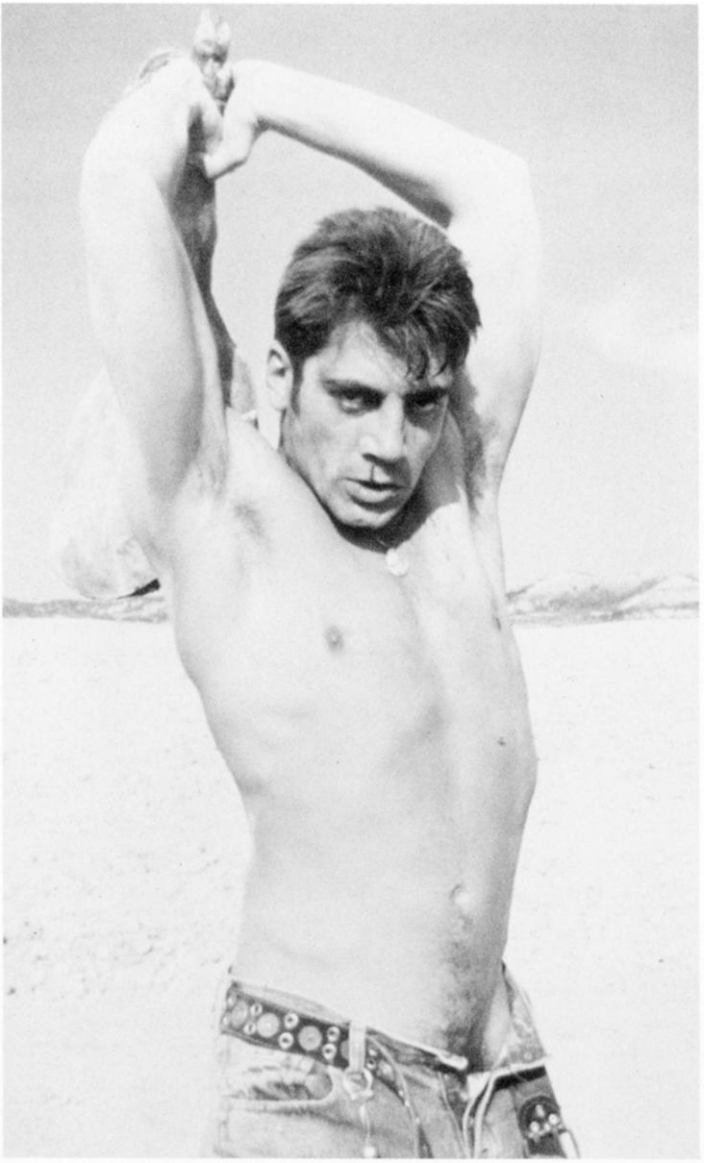
An ironic interplay between extreme close-ups and long shots is characteristic of the cinematic adaptation of *esperpento*, that distinctively Spanish form of absurdist humor which is associated with the modernist plays and novels of Ramón de Valle-Inclán and which has strongly influenced the visual style of Buñuel, Almodóvar, and Bigas Luna.

In earlier Bigas Luna films like *Bilbao*, *Lola*, and *Las edades de Lulú*, extreme close-ups evoke the erotic obsessiveness of the perverse protagonists, but here in an ensemble piece like *Jamón Jamón* (whose style and structure otherwise seem fairly conventional) these disruptive close-ups characterize the perverse perspective of the whole narrative and its consumerist context. Moreover, the close-ups and long shots are frequently linked by the assertive camera moves of José Luis Alcaine (who was also the cinematographer on Almodóvar's 1987 breakthrough film, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*)—moves that are so strikingly purposeful that they seem to be ardently pursuing the camera's objects of desire.

From the very opening of the film, this visual dynamic is associated with consumerism, for we go right from the close-up of the dangling *cojones* in the



Jamón Jamón: Javier Bardem (right) as Raúl and Penelope Cruz as Silvia



Would-be bullfighter Raúl and his *jamón*

Osborn sign to graceful sweeping pans across the desolate landscape, to a close-up of the parched earth, and then to even closer shots of Raúl's buttocks and crotch. In the factory sequence that immediately follows, extreme close-ups of female fingers doing piecework on the textured fabric of the briefs precede the first facial close-up of Silvia, who is introduced as one of the workers. Within the same sequence, large close-ups also pick out the crotches and faces of the young men auditioning for the Samson billboard. As if to make certain that we notice these visual dynamics, we see the auditions being videotaped, with the cameraman repeatedly kneeling for the crotch shot and then standing up for the facial close-up in one fluid movement that sweeps across the male torso, and then we also see a facial close-up of Conchita watching the live footage of these fetishized close-ups on a video monitor with rapt attention. As she tells her husband, these ads are primarily addressed to women because they buy the briefs. Not only do these two opening sequences literally refer to advertising discourse but the strong graphics and rapid cutting of their visual style also evoke the kind of audacious television commercials for which Spain became known in the 1980s, when the annual revenue for television spots reached close to two billion dollars. (In his 1990 "Global Report on Spain," *Variety*'s Madrid correspondent Peter Besas observed that between 1980 and 1989, advertising sales for Spanish television increased sevenfold, a faster rate of growth than any other nation during that same period.[2])

Though *Jamón Jamón* is Bigas Luna's eighth feature and winner of the Silver Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival, the film is being promoted on the coattails of Almodóvar's international success. It is praised in the press kit for proving "there is innovative film-making outside the Almodóvar stable." José Juan Bigas Luna is a Catalan film-maker from Barcelona who made his first feature *Tatuaje* (*Tattoo*) in 1976 at the age of 30 and his controversial masterwork, *Bilbao,* in 1978, two years before Almodóvar emerged on the Spanish film scene with *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón*. Though notorious for the outrageous ex-

cesses of his films (the droll bestiality of *Caniche*, 1978; the masochistic eroticism of his thriller, *Lola*, 1985; the witty, reflexive violence of his multinational parodic horror film, *Angústia* [*Anguish*], 1987; and the pornographic explicitness of *Las edades de Lulú* [*The Ages of Lulu*], 1990), Bigas Luna is seriously regarded by several noted Spanish critics (including Román Gubern) as one of Spain's most original film-makers. What is most remarkable about his films is that the excessiveness of their outrageous content is balanced by the brilliance of their aesthetic rigor and conceptual boldness—a combination that leads to a disturbing ambiguity of tone.

For example, *Bilbao* depicts the erotic obsessions of an infantilized man in Barcelona who fantasizes about escaping his repressive family by kidnapping a prostitute named Bilbao and making her float like Jesus—a vision that is at least partially inspired by Ribera's paintings of martyred saints. Convinced that she is the "best object," he becomes inflamed with consumerist desire. Though he merely wants to possess her, he nevertheless "accidentally" kills her. This claustrophobic "story of love" is totally dominated by his obsessive point of view, which is expressed through dehumanizing extreme close-ups (that evoke both the detail from the fine art of painting and the insert shot from pornography) and through his confiding voice-overs (that are delivered in hushed tones with no affect). Though this film caused a scandal at Cannes, it is regarded by Spaniards as one of the most brilliant works of the post-Franco era.[3]

Yet Bigas Luna is still not well known abroad, even though his underrated *Reborn*, 1981 (a cross between Huston's *Wise Blood* and Rossellini's *Miracle*, with touches of Godard's *Hail Mary*), was made in the U.S.A. (with Dennis Hopper in a leading role). In this crosscultural sacrilegious melodrama, Hopper plays a phony television evangelist from Houston who is joined on his "Miracle Tour" across America by an Italian vestal virgin with authentic stigmata (Antonella Murgia) who turns into a postmodern Madonna; she was bought from the Vatican by an Italian mobster (Francisco Rabal) who (echoing Coke commercials) claims to know "the real thing." Bigas Luna's crosscultural casting and humor also failed to draw large North American audiences to *Angústia*, although the film was a big commercial success in Spain. It stars Michael Lerner as a Norman Bates-type killer oculist who is manipulated into murder by his demonic mother (played by Zelda Rubenstein, fresh from her success in the Spielberg blockbuster, *Poltergeist*). Just when the gore gets unbearably grisly, we learn that their story is an inset East European horror film called *Mommy*, which is now being screened in a movie theater on Hollywood Boulevard, where it inspires another sexually repressed serial killer to go on a murder spree that is finally stopped by an L.A. SWAT team. This reflexive premise enables Bigas Luna to compare how violence is represented in different cultures and genres. The director may finally reach a global audience with *Jamón Jamón*, which should appeal to fans not only of Almodóvar but also of Sirk and Lynch.

Jamón Jamón plays on a wide range of intertextuality. Like Saura's debut feature, *Los golfos* (*Hooligans*, 1959), its opening evokes the first scene in Buñuel's *Los olvidados* (1950), showing young low-life buddies practicing bullfighting passes (without a bull) on the outskirts of town, but here Bigas Luna's long shots are punctuated with the kind of blatantly erotic crotch shots that can also be found in Almodóvar's *Matador* (1986). Not only does Raúl look like a handsome version of Buñuel's villainous Jaibo, but he provokes an equally surrealistic nightmare of castration and death in Silvia and robs his young rival (José Luis) of his mother, an erotic encounter that is also associated with meat (*jamón* rather than beef).

In its violent climax, *Jamón Jamón* uses a pair of ham bones to parodically reproduce Goya's famous painting, "Duel with Cudgels." In the process it also evokes Saura's serious adaptation of this image in *Llanto por un bandido* (*Lament for a Bandit*, 1963), with its overly dramatic music and its stylized movements between distancing long shots and brutal close-ups—an alternation that makes it difficult for us to miss the studied allusion. Yet Bigas Luna's bathetic choice of weapon also brings to mind Almodóvar's murderous ham bone in *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (*What Have I Done to Deserve This?*, 1984).

Jamón Jamón also has many allusions to Bigas Luna's own earlier works: the promise to the poodle that he won't be eaten evokes carnivorous scenes from *Caniche*; the *jamón* warehouse (where Raúl works and lives) brings to mind both the warehouse where Bilbao is murdered and the sausage factory where her corpse is turned into ground meat; and the rivalrous incestuous couplings between fathers and daughters and mothers and sons are reminiscent of similar yet less explicit rivalries in *Lola*.

The film's ubiquitous incest is pushed to the point of parodic humor by its excess (not one, but *two* rival incestuous mothers, "the mother whore" and "the whore mother," as they are labelled respectively in the final credits!). Yet as in Almodóvar's comic melodramas, these sex scenes still retain their erotic power, only here

the humor is more corrosive and less celebratory of pleasure, for Bigas Luna's films seriously question whether the effects of Spain's historic shift to democracy and postmodern consumerism are really as liberating as advertised. They seem to imply that just as in the 1960s, when the Franco regime promoted images of a modernized Spain abroad to woo Western tourists and investors for its economic miracle at home while still subjecting Spaniards to fascist repression, the post-Franco images of a super-liberated Spain now being promoted in the 1980s and 1990s are similarly bogus and exploitive. For the new commercial stereotypes of transgressive sexuality have merely replaced those earlier Spanish clichés of gypsies, flamenco dancers, and matadors—a substitution that has been most successfully promoted in the world market by Almodóvar's outrageous comedies.

In *Jamón Jamón,* this substitution of images is overseen by the businessman, Manuel—played by Juan Diego, the Communist actor who was the first to represent Franco on screen in a fictional film (Jaime Camino's *Dragón rapide* [1986], a popular Catalan docudrama about the outbreak of the Civil War). As if to make the connection to his fascist heritage explicit, Manuel emphatically refuses to change his company's advertising slogan because (like the well-known Osborn brandy slogan) his family "has used it successfully for three generations."

Carmen (Anna Galiena, right) and daughter Silvia

In contrast to Almodóvar's works, Bigas Luna's films are not populated by recently emancipated women, homosexuals, and transvestites; rather, his emotionally stunted characters retain an internalized repression which turns pathological in a consumerist context. The one exception may be *Las edades de Lulú*, which opens with the heroine's birth and immediately moves in for a fetishized close-up of her powdered pristine genitals, which remain the obsessive focus both of the camera and of her own transgressive pursuit of pleasure across all boundaries of gender and sexuality. Although the film's tone remains ambiguous, Lulu's liberated quest leads to heavy bondage, which is depicted as far more dangerous than it was in Almodóvar's *Atame* (*Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down,* 1989).

Though the eroticism of *Jamón Jamón* violates boundaries of class and generation, it is strictly heterosexual—despite the fact that Raúl obviously has homoerotic appeal and in one scene (where he pursues Silvia into the women's toilet) even quips, "I'm a bit of a *maricón*!" Instead, the film's sexual deviations verge toward incest and bestiality, deviations that are dependent on repression and that are very difficult to celebrate.

I do not mean to suggest that the characters in *Jamón Jamón* literally have sex with animals (as they do in *Caniche*) but rather that they themselves are identified with various animal species, perversely implying not only that their own incestuous behavior is "natural," but also that it is exogamous coupling (with a different species or class) that is truly transgressive. Virtually all of the main characters are associated with a different animal. The best example is Carmen, who "does the parrot" for José Luis as he masturbates; she imitates the bird with her words, her moves, and her tongue (an impersonation that actress Anna Galiena

makes wonderfully erotic) while her lewd parrot, Guaca, keeps shrieking "polla" (prick) like a sexual mantra. As in a bestiary, the men are differentiated and defined by the animals with whom they are symbolically linked. Infantilized by his bitchy mother, José Luis seems to identify with a lapdog, designing panties for she-dogs that they can wear when they are in heat. His father dismisses the idea with contempt, reminding him, "Our line is . . . for human beings!" Yet in the first incestuous embrace between Silvia and her prospective father-in-law, Manuel, who is also her mother's longtime lover, a fly crawls across his stony, lifeless face with its drone dominating the sound track, making us question whether he is human at all. This embrace is in marked contrast to an earlier hysterical scene where we see Carmen's handsome wayward husband trying to break into the house he long ago abandoned, perhaps to molest his oldest daughter, Silvia, who stands on the other side of the glass door sobbing, passionately declaring her love but still keeping him out. Though he beats against the door like the big bad wolf wielding a huge club in his hand, instead of using it to break through the glass he turns it against his own truck, which is teeming with terrified chickens.

The macho hunk Raúl (who physically resembles Silvia's father) is also associated with two animals, the bull and the hog. Not only is he introduced to the audience quite literally under the phallic sign of the bull, but later he and a friend prove they have balls by clandestinely sneaking into a bull pen—naked and with a hard-on—to do passes with a bull in the dark. Yet, to gain entry to Silvia's house and heart, Raúl bathetically chooses to identify with pigs (rather than with chickens or the big bad wolf like her father). To make Silvia open her door, he sticks a clove of garlic up the ass of her family pig and then provides the grunting sound effects; together they subdue the beast and save it from an oncoming truck, a communal act that leads them to adopt ever-after the endearing epithets "Cerdo" (pork) and "Jamona" (ham) respectively. Later, when he falls off his motorcycle as it runs down her younger sisters' darling pet piglet, Pablito, Silvia declares her undying love not for the dead swine (who soon will be eaten) but for the surviving Raúl.

In the daylight barroom scene where Silvia and Raúl have sex for the first time, their reckless abandon is as wild as that of the lovers in Lynch's *Wild at Heart.* Yet, despite the swelling music, the symbolic dissolves, and the orgasmic jackpot on Raúl's slot machine, the romantic ecstasy is deflated by the other customers, who flee the bar as if they were watching two copulating beasts, and by the lovers' final climax, which takes place under the castrated sign of the bull. This scene displays a masterful control of tone as the perspective shifts abruptly from inside to outside the romance, undercutting the erotic climax with *esperpento.*

As I have argued elsewhere, the Spanish oedipal narrative frequently conflates Oedipus and Samson, who are mirror images of each other, eroticizing incest and exogamy respectively as reversible sexual taboos.[4] In *Jamón Jamón,* the advertising slogan that Manuel's family has used successfully over three generations for its briefs is: "You've a Samson inside!"—a slogan that appears on the billboard which prominently displays Raúl's genitalia securely encased within a fashionable polka-dotted crotch. Within this consumerist oedipal narrative, Raúl plays the exogamous Samsonite jock who threatens to rupture the patrimonial line of these philistine capitalists and leave their family in ruins. Yet, consistent with melodrama, despite all the violence and hysteria nothing of substance really changes. With the final sweeping camera movement the film merely reshuffles its six transgressive characters into three incestuous pairs artfully posed for a final melodramatic triptych. Not only does this painterly tableau evoke traditional Christian iconography (with a double Pietà), but it also restores power to the rich incestuous patriarch. Instead of being barred from the door like Sylvia's lowlife father, Manuel stands upright like a rock, supporting his son's pregnant fiancée with his embrace, ready to finance and appropriate his post-Franco Madonna and child.

MARSHA KINDER

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NOTES

1. Ortega y Gasset, José, "The Dehumanization of Art," in *Velázquez, Goya and the Dehumanization of Art,* trans. Alexis Brown (New York: W. W. Norton, 1953), p. 77.
2. Peter Besas, "TV ad sales grow 7-fold in 10-years," *Variety* (September 24, 1990), p. 58.
3. For a detailed analysis of *Bilbao,* see my essay "The Spanish Oedipal Narrative from *Raza* to *Bilbao,*" *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 13, no. 4 (1991), pp. 67–94. A longer version of this essay appears as chapter 5 in *Blood Cinema.*
4. "The Spanish Oedipal Narrative," pp. 75–76.

Manufacturing Consent

Directors: Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick. Producers: Wintonick, Achbar, and Adam Symansky. Editor: Wintonick. Music: Carl Schultz. Zeitgeist Films.

Agitprop has entered documentary filmmaking with a vengeance. *The Thin Blue Line*, *Roger & Me*, and *A Brief History of Time*, to name the most prominent of recent documentaries, are very clear about what axe they are grinding. With similarly iconoclastic methods, *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media* shows us aborted interviews, archival footage used ironically, the process behind mass media methodology opened up like an empty envelope, weighty symbols thrown at us from the junk pile of popular culture, and a rhythm influenced by MTV slowing down only to let distinguished intellectuals viciously attack each other. Gone are the purportedly noncommittal, cool observational styles of "Watch-and-Wait" Wiseman and his followers. This is a hip, impatient, intellectually aggressive documentary school that has accepted the challenge of making *its* political reality at least as interesting as intelligent bombs.

The film presents the best and the worst (often at the same time) of mass media from a wide range of newspeople in print, radio, and television. In true agitprop style, the two film-makers are caught on camera (but not grandstanding) as they follow political activist Noam Chomsky, who has been the model of activism for two generations of Americans, pounding his drum. This is the aftermath of the sixties—its axe surprisingly sharp after all these years.

A 167-minute Canadian documentary full of Noam Chomsky sounds like a Civics lesson. But encountering Chomsky through this stylish and gutsy film is like running into Socrates outside the temple, with video screens replacing Greek columns. There's nothing reverent here either in what Chomsky has to say or in what the documentary has to say about Chomsky, although the film-makers endorse his critique of and solutions for mass media and especially his detached style. Not always diplomatic, incessantly critical, Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick are as engaged but aloof as their Canadian countrymen Marshall McLuhan, Robin MacNeil, and Peter Jennings.

At a more profound level, Chomsky's message is about the meaninglessness of freedom of speech and press (and the entire First Amendment) if we don't have the freedom to think. Our ability to analyze and challenge the Cheez Whiz of the news media is increasingly in jeopardy. Chomsky claims it is not in the interest of news organizations and the bastions of power behind them to have us think. Their role as thought-police is examined in *Manufacturing Consent*, and while Chomsky does not fit the profile of a hysterical radical, he certainly presents an alarming case for believing that the public is systematically denied access to information by a paternalistic and corrupt system.

Even stating such a claim poses the unfortunate dilemma of being considered either paranoid or naïve. Knowing what we know of the last 30 years of governmental and industrial mismanagement, is it reasonable even to pursue the truth, much less the facts?

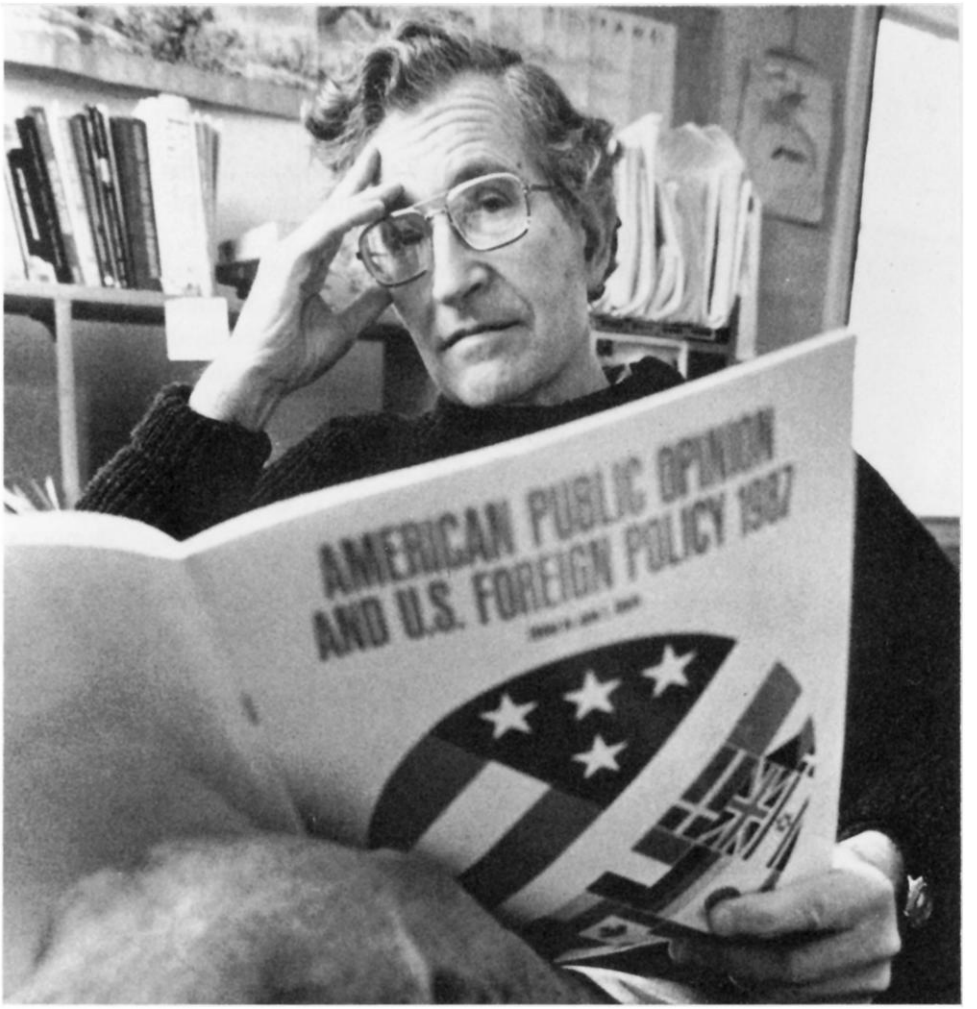
Yes, argues Chomsky, for if we don't we must bear the guilt for what goes wrong with the world. Our silence or willing ignorance is complicity. "It is the responsibility of intellectuals to speak the truth and expose lies." That is how Chomsky defines himself and his mission, and he is a virulent critic of irresponsible and/or nonintellectual powermongers.

Without Chomsky's matter-of-fact speeches and his uncompromising morality to guide the film, it would be just another documentary about another hopeless dilemma. Despite his diffidence, *Manufacturing Consent* draws its lessons from Noam Chomsky's political ideas and ideals, not his life or life-style. There is a refreshing lack of the kind of personal detail that clutters most personality profiles.

Two well-selected biographical nuggets explain Chomsky as a child. The son of Zionist teachers, he was introduced to political debate amid the arguments of average people gathering at his uncle's news kiosk by the Broadway and 72nd Street subway station. Another personal anecdote has Chomsky describing a moment of guilt in a case of schoolyard injustice, when he rose to defend another child but ultimately ran away because he also became intimidated by the bullies. It so shamed him that, by his own account, he has pledged never again to permit himself to run from a fight.

And run he doesn't—in the face of outrageous attacks. The schoolyard bully approach is captured in a clip from a 1969 interview with William F. Buckley. Discussing his opposition to the Vietnam War, Chomsky wryly complains, "Sometimes I lose my temper. Maybe not tonight," against which Buckley lashes out, "Maybe not tonight, uh, because if you would I'd smash you in the goddamn face," to which Chomsky adds, "That's a good reason for not losing my temper."

While these anecdotes are instructive about taking a stand, their function within the film is to help us see



To keep propaganda from killing democracy: Noam Chomsky in *Manufacturing Consent*

Chomsky as a role model, because *Manufacturing Consent* is not, according to Peter Wintonick, "about Chomsky per se but about a wave of dissent and discontent that is sweeping through society which supports Chomsky's point of view. It could be about you or me and make the same points."

Accustomed to their table-tennis technique, his partner, Mark Achbar, adds, "We didn't set out to lionize Chomsky, but we needed a magnet for the social dissent that fuels the alternative media and an ever larger public concern that we're being duped by the mass media and the government. Noam has a very interesting theory about how those institutions work in tandem to keep us in the dark. He is a compelling thinker and speaker."

"Because he is obsessed with power," chimes in Wintonick, "and most people that are interested in power want to get it, not to analyze it . . ." "and its abuses." Achbar finishes Wintonick's sentence. (Their editing techniques also display the vitality of call-and-response, chant-and-echo.)

Yet Chomsky is a powerful person in his own right, a fact which the documentary and Chomsky seem to forget. He may not be a rock star or a charismatic politician, but he attracts huge audiences everywhere but Washington, D.C. In Europe, he is considered a major American intellectual force, on a par with Roland Barthes in France, Umberto Eco in Italy, Václav Havel in the Czech Republic—men who can think theoretically, write intelligently, and act on their beliefs. Perhaps Chomsky's power lies in his appeal to people who feel powerless.

The ability of apparently powerless people to change the course of politics is one of the most important history lessons of our time, a fact which looms over the film-makers and the audience, and increases the unmentioned parallel with the oppressed of eastern Europe. Can common people liberate themselves from the web of propaganda draped across American popular culture? Chomsky's call has an increased urgency because throughout the world, brotherhoods of workers have overthrown the far more dangerous, terrorizing threats of the Communist bureaucracy. Who then are we to whine about Time-Warner?

Why does Chomsky think the average man can take to the barricades against the media? Because Chomsky accords other people his own intelligence, forgetting however that he, Chomsky, seems never to

be distracted by mere pleasure. Take, for example, his point about sports, a human activity that churns hundreds of billions of dollars yearly.

Speaking to an audience in Hamilton, Ontario, and from a video wall at Montreal's Olympic Stadium (where Wintonick and Achbar projected the speech, all the better to highlight its audacity), Chomsky notes, "It's striking to see the intelligence that's used by ordinary people in sports . . . they have the most exotic information and understanding about all kinds of arcane issues. . . . That's why energy is devoted to supporting them and advertisers are willing to pay for them and so on."

This attack on the very gonads of American culture seems careless at first, but then as I watch the 1993 National Football League finals, the game is interrupted to announce that the U.S.A. is again engaged in bombing strategic sites in Baghdad, and one can't help but recall the yellow-ribbon pageantry at the 1991 Superbowl for our efforts to spread democracy in the Gulf. The irrational jingoism of football is a prime time to garner support for wars against infidels. Could Chomsky be right?

It is exactly this itch, our fear of being duped, that he scratches. Still, it angers people to be told they are gullible. And therein lies Chomsky's and, inevitably, this film's potential to arouse controversy and hatred. The President of Boston University, himself no stranger to controversy, cannot restrain himself from a rude attack on Chomsky in a 1986 debate about the Contras on WGBH. Stopping Chomsky from citing an atrocity, John Silber screams, "You are a systematic liar . . . you are a phony, Mister, and it's time that the people read you correctly."

Despite the controversy surrounding Chomsky, he is not a pitbull politician. He began his professional life with no small distinction as the man who proposed transformational linguistics and posited that language is innately human, even genetically programmed, rather than culturally determined (thus arguing against the theories and experiments of the reigning social scientist of the time, B. F. Skinner). His 1957 work, *Syntactic Structures*, became a standard text for anyone interested in linguistics—which itself was soon to become the reigning theoretical approach to just about everything. Chomsky was credited with its revolution.

In the 1960s, Chomsky became discontent with the metalanguage of theoretical discourse and set out to exercise himself as a citizen; he expected "to spend years in jail, and came very close to it." Another of his books, *American Power and the New Mandarin* (1968), helped solidify opinion against American involvement in Indochina and made him an icon of the New Left.

"Democracy," he says in a speech at Georgetown University, "requires free access to ideas and information." This simple proposition seems so self-evident that it takes a very aggressive intellect to dig behind the apparatus of the age of information to see that the information parcelled out to the public is predigested. "Manufacturing consent" is said to be a phrase first used by Walter Lippmann to describe the process of creating necessary illusions in order to shortcut the democratic process. A ruling class makes choices; appropriate propaganda techniques solicit the consent of the governed under the illusion that the fait accompli being presented was the only reasonable choice.

"The task of media," notes Chomsky, is "to mobilize public support for decisions made by those in charge," who hide their self-interest behind certain myths. To explore the manufacturing of news, the filmmakers lead us into the offices of *The New York Times*. A silver-haired public-affairs hack insists they cannot film in certain areas, so the screen goes black, and we are left in the dark as we listen to august descriptions before meeting editorial board member Karl Meyer, who disingenuously apologizes for the imperfect coverage of atrocities in East Timor.

The horrific news from East Timor is used as a model for the way the media apparatus foregoes political situations too complicated for the mere public and which could put the agenda of U.S. nuclear submarine activity in the South Seas in jeopardy. While this particular case requires attention not appropriate for this space, it justifies viewing *Manufacturing Consent* as a film that practices what it preaches: East Timor deserves an hour of media attention; it gets it.

The visuals of the film are inventive, caustic, and highly entertaining, but the meat of the movie is on its sound track. Perhaps the success of such a film is that it enlists the razzle-dazzle of today's TV news shows to impart a sober and sobering message. A certain degree of cognitive dissonance is created in the friction between its entertainment value and its intense politics. The extraordinary achievement of *Manufacturing Consent* is to use cognitive dissonance to remind us we have to be as alert as Noam Chomsky to keep propaganda from killing democracy.

KAREN JAEHNE

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Annual Film Quarterly Book Roundup (Part II)

Babel and Babylon
Spectatorship in American Silent Film
By Miriam Hansen. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991. $37.50.

Those who are interested in silent film should be pleased by the appearance of a brilliant entry into the field, Miriam Hansen's *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*. Her consideration of film reception and spectatorship during the silent era is played out through the examination of various texts and historical junctures that marked the paradigmatic shift from primitive to classical Hollywood cinema. Within this overall strategy, Hansen works to trace Hollywood's creation of film-viewer relations during an era that solidified the cinema's place in public life.

In shaping her interpretive framework to these issues, Hansen borrows from Kluge, Habermas, and Foucault to examine primitive cinema's production of a bricolage-originated heterogeneity that opened up the possibility of cinema as an "alternative public sphere." She explores how film as such a sphere functioned for particular social groups at specific times and how their experiences shaped the "horizon of reception." Pre-classical films' heterogeneity gave rise, she argues, to "diverging and deviant viewer responses." Hansen makes the case for a different voyeurism in early cinema, one which was not properly "spectatorship" but a film reception bound up in a context-determined social audience. She details exhibition practices and offers compelling consideration of their relation to specific social groups such as urban immigrants and women.

As an outgrowth of this discussion, Hansen provides a symptomatic interpretation of Porter's intertextually rich film *The 'Teddy' Bears*. Her reading of the 1907 release proceeds, she says, "from conflicts and contradictions that shaped the historical horizon of reception"; it is also aimed at demonstrating the film's psychoanalytic and intertextual fascinations in this era of cinema as a potential site of what Foucault labelled "heterotopia."

In her pursuit of silent film's transition to a different concept of spectatorship, Hansen considers the impact of the gentrification of the American film audience and the formal articulation of a growing range of visual methods of spectator positioning in relation to the ideological objectives of Hollywood's self-sufficient "classical" narratives. Not only did the cinema generate a metadiscourse of consumption but it also changed as a social site of spatial and symbolic configurations. In arguing for a distinct shift in spectating tied to classical narration, Hansen claims that this marked formal shift to a "textual homogenization of positions of subjectivity" also en-

tailed a structural masculinization of spectator positioning. Hansen considers classical codification as evidence of patriarchal structures that constitute "a defensive symptom, a reaction against the historical challenge the cinema presented to the gendered hierarchy of private and public spheres."

To demonstrate the complexity of this shift, the chapters in the second part of Hansen's book offer an intertextually sensitive close textual analysis that illuminates the "idiosyncratic conception of film-viewer relations" in D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*. Hansen argues that the film's use of primitive devices dramatizes "the tension between spectatorship and reception on the threshold of classical codification." Central to her analysis is her claim that "Griffith's obsession with a sense of femininity in crisis is at the heart of *Intolerance,*" and that this crisis "destabilizes the film's textual system." The film's effectiveness in creating spectatorial engagement is hampered because the "gaze as the medium of cinematic subjectivity is contaminated with the power of the perverted female look." Although some readers may be skeptical of such claims, there can be little doubt that Hansen's reading of *Intolerance* is a provocative and intellectually resonant one that compels the reader to return to a difficult film and to reconsider its excesses with new insight.

Hansen ends her exploration of the spectatorial and textual transition to classical cinema with part 3, a two-chapter exploration of the star phenomenon of Rudolph Valentino. Indicative of her tendency occasionally to make extreme statements that are left unproven, Hansen claims that Valentino was "a catalyst for major changes in gender roles and relations." First, she explores his extratextual relationship to the cinema's consumerist appeal to and appropriation of female desire, and then she examines, through a psychoanalytic perspective informed by Freud's "A Child Is Being Beaten" essay, how his films textually "thematized the contradictions of female spectatorship."

Hansen's avowed aim in part 3 is to trace "the contradictions of female spectatorship both inside and outside the [Valentino] films," but a methodological contradiction is exposed by the juxtaposition of the last two chapters. That same methodological problematic underscores much of the book. Hansen's exploration of extratextual materials attached to Valentino's stardom never seeks in a significant way to embrace a broader analysis of the cultural-historical moment or even of the historical context of male film stardom. Instead, she returns in the book's final chapter to a narrow psychoanalytic reading of textual strategies that largely ignores the complicating implications of her previous chapter. Thus, in spite of the very carefully nuanced and convincing tone of much of *Babel and Babylon*, there is evidence, too, of a reductionist kind of dehistoricizing theoretical orthodoxy that retreats from the ambiguous contextual dimensions of the social, of history and politics, and of film itself.

Occasionally opaque but always interesting, Hansen's book is an impressive achievement. If I admit that the margins of my copy of *Babel and Babylon* are filled with exclamation and question marks, it is not to undermine Hansen's accomplishment. Rather, I think it is a testament to her book's potential usefulness in opening up discussion of important questions specific to the silent era as well as those more general ones surrounding spectatorship, cinematic form, gender, and pleasure that have preoccupied so many in film as an arena of study.

GAYLYN STUDLAR

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Bridge of Light
Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds

By J. Hoberman. New York: Schocken Books/Museum of Modern Art, 1991. $40.00.

It is impossible, I suppose at least for the Jewish critic, to look at Yiddish cinema in any way other than with a combination of nostalgia and anger. For Yiddish cinema is inevitably inflected by the entire world of Yiddish culture, that mélange of conflicting intellectual and emotional ideas and ideals born of Jewish hope and pain in the cities and *shtetls* of Eastern Europe, now gone forever. The nostalgia one feels is the bittersweet recollection of the heady days of immigrant life on New York's Lower East Side—which disappeared due to American largesse and Jewish success. And the anger one feels is tinged with bitterness at the recognition that Yiddish culture did not so much disappear from Europe as it was wiped out in the horrors of the Holocaust. *Bridge of Light*, J. Hoberman's beautifully mounted and superbly researched survey of the entire range of Yiddish film-making, is not simply a study of a small corpus of often interesting films, but a tribute, indeed a monument, to a world lost forever in the ashes of history.

That the book is not the definitive study of its topic is perhaps less a flaw in design or conception than a problem in the truest sense of the word. It must be stressed and acclaimed that there are many wonderful things here. The more than 150 stills, many of them frame enlargements, are exactingly reproduced (MoMA's involvement in the project shows through wonderfully in this respect). The research that went into the study was prodigious. Hoberman was apparently able to view virtually every

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That the book is not the definitive study of its topic is perhaps less a flaw in design or conception than a problem in the truest sense of the word. It must be stressed and acclaimed that there are many wonderful things here. The more than 150 stills, many of them frame enlargements, are exactingly reproduced (MoMA's involvement in the project shows through wonderfully in this respect). The research that went into the study was prodigious. Hoberman was apparently able to view virtually every

extant frame of Yiddish cinema, and used secondary sources drawn from eight different languages. The archives of the National Center for Jewish Film at Brandeis University were put at his disposal, as were the archives at MoMA, YIVO, and the Jerusalem cinémathèque, along with special collections at numerous libraries, including the University of Illinois's famed Slavic Library and Reference Service. One only wishes that the author or publisher had included something so basic as a listing of extant Yiddish films held at the NCJF. It is not always clear which films Hoberman actually saw and how much of particular films survives. On the other hand, he is clear about what he feels are the major motifs of Yiddish cinema—Old Country vs. New World; Folk Community vs. Industrial Society; *Shtetl* vs. City; Parent vs. Child—and the significance of generic modes like comedy, melodrama, and the musical.

It is Hoberman's stated intention to integrate Yiddish film into the history of world cinema. In so doing, he produces the book's strengths and weaknesses, and brings forward, at least implicitly, the major problem here: a definition of Yiddish cinema. This is especially apparent in the sections devoted to so-called Yiddish Silent Cinema, which constitute fully one-third of the book. For Yiddish cinema is distinguished, in ways that other cinemas are not (or not necessarily), precisely by the spoken language in which the films were made. Thus one can speak of a Japanese cinema or a French cinema in the silent era in ways that do not seem odd or paradoxical, but which seem so in the case of Yiddish films. Yiddish cinema, silent or spoken, was a transnational phenomenon, a question of culture and not of nation. This problem is exacerbated by the particularities of the Jewish historical situation, so that one could speak of Russian-Yiddish, Polish-Yiddish, or American-Yiddish films, works produced by and for Jews in these various countries and which dealt with the specifics of Jewish life during those times. Pro-Communist propaganda of the Soviet Union in the 1920s, and then of a different sort in the 1930s, in any case always had little in common with the lighthearted comedies or intense melodramas arising out of New York's teeming Jewish community.

This problem is itself further complicated by Hoberman's insistence on discussing Jewish-themed films made in the same period as what might be called Yiddish films of the time. No one would confuse D. W. Griffith's Biograph films like *Old Isaacs the Pawnbroker* and *Romance of a Jewess* with a burgeoning Yiddish cinema, or even Jewish producer and member of the Patents Company Sigmund Lubin's *The Yiddish Boy* as the expression of Yiddishist cinema. But the case of *Tkies Kaf* (*The Handshake*, 1925), produced in Poland, does get confusing: stars of the Yiddish theater and a Yiddish-speaking Jewish producer, director, and writer are involved, but the original release version of the film utilizes Polish intertitles, with Yiddish ones added only later.

On the other hand, it is important to be reminded of specifically Jewish-themed films produced not only in the U.S. but also in pre-WWI and post-WWI Poland, pre- and post-revolutionary Russia, Weimar Germany, Austria, even Romania. Again, it seems less a flaw of the book than a particularity of Jewish history that a question of a Jewish culture (*Yiddishkayt*) and its cinematic expression be inflected by the situation of Jewish artists and filmmakers during this intense period.

When discussing the Yiddish sound film, Hoberman is on surer ground, precisely because the definition of Yiddish cinema is implicit in films which rely almost exclusively on the language. Discussions of some of the better-known works of the small Yiddish canon, such as *Yidl mitn Fidl* (*Yiddle with his Fiddle*), *Grine Felder* (*Green Fields*), and *Der Dibek* (*The Dybbuk*), seem fresh and invigorated by the historical and critical context the author brings. But another problem arises in these chapters, and that is Hoberman's seeming unwillingness to come to terms with some of the issues he himself brings up, namely the always shaky artistic qualities of the vast majority of Yiddish films, and the undeniable superiority of European (especially East European) Yiddish filmmaking compared to the U.S. Hoberman is unafraid to criticize individual films for their staginess, their cheapness, or their shamelessness—indeed he devotes an entire chapter to *shund*, the derogatory Yiddish term for the weepy melodramas popularized in the Yiddish theater and equally trashy when consigned to cinema. But he is less willing to speculate on the relative artistic inferiority of U.S.-produced Yiddish films, not only compared to their East European counterparts but also, and more particularly, to Hollywood films of the same era.

Hoberman does not point out, for instance, that by the time talkies were introduced, the audience for Yiddish theater and film was primarily confined to the now-aging immigrant generation. For one of the most striking elements of Jewish assimilation into the American mainstream was the almost-immediate loss of Yiddish among American-born Jews. Today's politically correct liberals who encourage, even demand, bilingual public education are a far cry from the New York City school system which, with the encouragement of the city's Jewish publications, banned Yiddish from the classroom. Thus if the predominate theme of the Yiddish talkie was a nostalgia for the religious, familial, and communal values of the *shtetl*, one can see why. And if one wonders why there was no Yiddish-cinema Louis B. Mayer, or Carl Laemmle, or Jack Warner, or Harry Cohn, or Sam Goldwyn, we must remember it was because these Yiddish-speaking immigrants entered the wider world of the American cinema. For America-Jewish producers, writers, actors,

and composers, the large world of Hollywood film-making proved more attractive than the insular world of Yiddish culture, while American largesse made it possible for these businessmen and artists to make their mark on the entire society. The situation for Polish Jews was far different, both in terms of the precarious political situation of Europe in the 1930s and the inability to assimilate due to virulent anti-Semitism. Thus their historical situation led to more acutely moving films, and kept superior artists at home, so to speak, in the world of Jewish film-making.

Perhaps no single book can answer every question or deal with every single issue that suggests itself. And more than most film books, Hoberman's provides a wealth of information on all aspects affecting its subject. He avoids what historians have come to call the "lachrymose" view of Jewish history (seeing only victimization and degradation and turning every Yiddish film-maker into a martyr) but also refuses to turn the people he writes about into heroes. Instead, he lets the information he has amassed slowly build into an entire world view, a splendid evocation of a national cinema that never was. Perhaps Hoberman's most poignant and subtle tribute to his topic is that he introduces each film by its Yiddish title, provides an English title or translation, and then renders each subsequent mention in the original Yiddish, thereby in a small but moving manner helping to preserve a culture which lives only in the flickering images on the silver screen.

DAVID DESSER

■ David Desser teaches at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917–1953

By Peter Kenez. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992. $59.95 cloth; $18.95 paper.

Peter Kenez offers a survey of policies and practices in Soviet cinema from the prerevolutionary era through the death of Stalin. The author consciously treats his project as a matter of mass communication rather than artistic expression. His strategy is to shift between discussions of film-making policy as determined by the Party leadership and ideological trends manifested in major films. Kenez professes little interest in treating the films as art objects, arguing instead that the movies are best understood as the products of state mandates. He thus offers no systematic aesthetic evaluations, does not treat the theoretical discussions developed within the film community, and avoids trying to place Russian national cinema in the context of international film-making.

The contribution of Kenez's self-described sociological approach is its careful discussion of the Party's views of mass persuasion and their impact on film-making, and this effort thus bears a resemblance to Kenez's earlier work, *The Birth of the Propaganda State* (Cambridge University Press, 1985). Indeed, the title of the book considered here, which stresses Soviet society, is somewhat misleading. Kenez offers no coherent sociology of this medium in that he cannot confidently discuss the relationship between audiences and films. His approach is top down: policy is made by a political elite and then is translated into specific film narratives. His research on this issue is impressive. He documents, for example, the extent to which Stalin himself became personally involved in the conduct of the film industry; his capricious interventions into film-making affairs occasionally resulted in otherwise stalled productions being put on course. The "supreme censor," (144) as Kenez describes him, need not fear being second-guessed by film-industry bureaucrats.

Kenez is quick to admit that gauging audience response to the films is difficult. The Soviets themselves were not especially successful in gathering and analyzing audience data, and they left behind only fragmentary evidence for Western scholars to exploit. That does not prevent Kenez from making certain assumptions about audience tastes. He will sometimes declare a given film successful or unsuccessful, and the evidence or even the basis of the judgement remains unclear. For example, when *Old and New* is characterized as "undoubtedly [Eisenstein's] least successful film," (93) one is not certain whether the judgement has to do with audience reception or an aesthetic failure.

Indeed, Kenez's view that there "was an inverse relationship between the popularity of [a] film and its propaganda value from the point of view of Communist authorities" (95) is reiterated in various ways through the text, as he develops an argument that the Party was committed to perpetuating a false image of Soviet existence. The claim might seem intuitively correct for some genres and film-making formulas; there is ample evidence, for example, that the likes of Eisenstein and Vertov had a difficult time competing with more mainstream directors for a mass audience. Nevertheless, plenty of films made under strict control during the Stalin era exploited the most tried conventions of popular cinema and enjoyed considerable audience support. Would *Chapaev* or *Aerograd* be less worthy as propaganda vehicles for their popular success?

To some extent, such blanket claims derive from the faith that there would have been an unmediated transmis-

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To some extent, such blanket claims derive from the faith that there would have been an unmediated transmis-

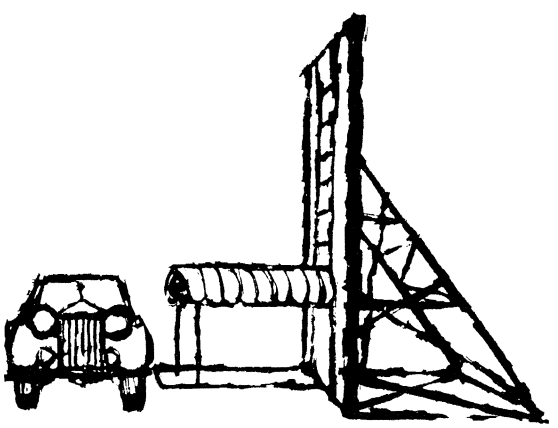
sion of state practice into any film. The extent to which the films could have been the product of multiple determinations is not explored. Tensions between formulas dictated from above and genre conventions which had their own vitality would have shaped any number of the films described in this account. As industry discourse reveals, the film-makers themselves were not insensitive to the give-and-take between official ideology and narrative convention or to that between the political leadership and the audience.

Nor was this tension lost on the industry bureaucrats behind the camera who had to translate cultural politics into film-making practice. But Kenez's portrait of the film industry administration is surprisingly incomplete. He offers an excellent account of the procedures of industry censors but little information about the day-to-day workings of the studios and their supervisors. The implementation of central planning in the early 1930s shifted the film industry from a largely market to a largely administrative system of production. One comes away from this volume with little sense of how central planning operated and what it meant to the film corpus.

Kenez's ambition is to account for the effects of a statist communist system on a national film industry. One effect was that the films sacrificed nuance for simplicity and clarity. Something of the same might be said of the arguments in this book.

VANCE KEPLEY, JR.

■ Vance Kepley, Jr., teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Drive-In Theaters

By Kerry Segrave. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1992. $32.50.

Kerry Segrave chronicles the rise and fall of the drive-in movie theater in the U.S.A., dividing his attention between technical and sociocultural concerns. There is explicitly no overt methodology; complex historiographic issues are avoided. The book's structure is explicitly nostalgic: "[The drive-in] belongs to the 1950s, the era of the Hula Hoop, of 'Leave It to Beaver,' of Ike, of the family, of the pinball machine, of huge cars guzzling cheap gas." (197) Tidbits ("Strange Drive-Ins") make up the bulk of this nearly 300-page tome. The precise coverage of topics, all extensively footnoted, depended on the availability of material in *Variety*, *Motion Picture Herald*, and *Boxoffice*.

Drive-In Theaters contains more than 50 black-and-white photographs, all from *Motion Picture Herald*. Images of vast screens complete with garish advertising and alluring motifs, innovations such as "rain-a-way" windshield covers, and special treats from pony rides to shuffleboard courts can be found sprinkled throughout *Drive-In Theaters*. I applaud Segrave for not reprinting the usual shots, but it would have been nice to have some color. There are 1,000 drive-ins still in operation today, and that half of the U.S. population born since 1960 needs to directly gaze upon the grand reds, stunning blues, and glaring greens of a golden age drive-in.

I love the book's appendices, which include reproductions of original patents and architectural plans and lists of drive-in firsts. (Israel got its initial drive-in, outside Tel Aviv, in 1973!) The final pages of *Drive-In Theaters* also include fascinating data on start-up costs—about $100,000 in 1948. This type of primary information makes *Drive-In Theaters* an invaluable reference tool.

The author also disposes of a number of widely held myths. For example, Segrave argues that "[T]eenagers . . . formed only a small portion of the audience" (viii) in a typical 1950s drive-in, and applauds the drive-in as the best and final site for *family* moviegoing. And: "The idea that ozoners [*Variety*-speak for drive-ins] did well in the good weather areas of the South and West is not borne out by the census data." (195) In the late 1980s, audience share of receipts from drive-ins in warm climes such as Arizona and Florida did not match the monies generated by auto-theaters in colder Ohio and Michigan.

But in the end what does it all mean? Kerry Segrave seems satisfied with retelling a familiar narrative. From difficult beginnings there came a "Golden Age" and then a sad decline.

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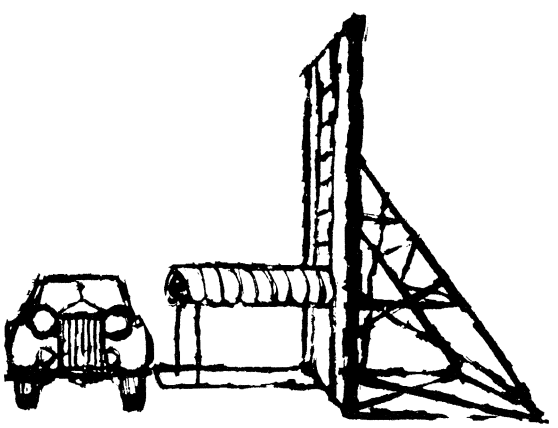

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movie palaces; they wanted to go to a show near their new suburban home, in a car. But, as I argued in *Shared Pleasures* (Wisconsin University Press, 1992), within a decade, entrepreneurs knew the drive-in failed to efficiently satisfy these desires. Segrave too quickly skips over an important remark by a leading industry executive: "We're not fools. If that [drive-in] land becomes more productive for another use, we're not stubbornly going to continue to run drive-ins." (190) They built mall cineplexes.

Indeed, the very forces we call suburbanization killed the drive-in as wave after wave of new subdivisions was constructed miles beyond the locations of the original drive-ins. Only movies in the mall, at the crossroads of an interstate and/or beltway, and integrated with shopping would prove a long-lasting economic and social solution. Nostalgia clouds this cold reality, but in the history of the cinema, the drive-in did not prove to be any more important than the nickelodeon, a short-lived transitional phenomenon.

DOUGLAS GOMERY

■ Douglas Gomery teaches at the University of Maryland at College Park.

Etienne-Jules Marey
A Passion for the Trace
By François Dagognet, translated by Robert Galeta and Jeanine Herman. New York: Zone Books, 1992. $26.95.

Picturing Time
The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904)
By Marta Braun. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. $65.00.

The chronophotographs of physiologist Etienne-Jules Marey decorate the opening pages of standard film histories. These images of successive phantom figures tracing out the trajectory of simple motions are juxtaposed with the more familiar serial images of galloping horse and nudes of Eadweard Muybridge as examples of the photographical investigation of motion which stand as cinema's most immediate precursor. While Muybridge has been the subject of a number of monographs, Marey has been neglected in English until last year, when suddenly two lavishly illustrated works appeared, from the venerable University of Chicago Press and the innovative Zone Books. These books do more than address a neglected figure. As the recent reinvestigation of the history of early cinema begins to broaden out into a new understanding of the foundations of modernity, these books reveal a key figure in the changes of perception and representation that mark the turn of the twentieth century. While Braun's book in particular details the crucial role Marey played in the technical development of motion pictures, it is the total picture of his scientific work which these books provide that makes them so important.

Marey played a somewhat contradictory role in the development of motion pictures. While chronophotography was essential to the technical development of the motion picture camera, Marey expressed relative indifference to the Lumière brothers' cinématographe, whose main improvement lay in its ability to project images life-size and at a regular speed so that they gave the illusion of life-like motion. Marey, however, had been intrigued by the analysis of motion, not its synthesis. The scientific breaking down of motion into its phases with a clear sense of trajectory and duration was his achievement. The images of chronophotography revealed something the unarmed human eye could not see: the actual positions of humans and animals as they undertook actions whose natural speed obscured their actual processes. Through chronophotography the invisible was rendered visible and analysable, measureable—a triumph for positivism in recording previously invisible processes. In contrast, the cinématographe reproduced what the eye saw. Its familiarity made it entertaining, but of limited scientific value.

Both authors stress Marey's method, his desire to record the visible world in a manner that transformed perceptions into the data of science. As Dagognet indicates, Marey's major impetus in all his work came from a suspicion about the evidence of human perception. This suspicion led him to develop a number of apparatuses by which the processes of nature could directly trace patterns of motion without human intervention. This "passion for the trace" led him to pursue through a variety of media "the automatic writing of nature itself." As both authors make abundantly clear, this obsessive attempt to directly capture the writing of motion unites the apparently diverse areas of investigation with which he was involved. Marey investigated the circulatory system, movement of humans and animals, problems of aviation, and methods of gymnastic and military training. But if this list (which hardly covers all areas of his investigations) seems eclectic, both authors reveal the logic underlying the variety. In all cases, Marey perfected instruments that could record barely perceptible motions (the pulse; the gait; patterns of air pressure; flexing of muscles) that could reveal the flow of blood, diseases of the spine, the ability of man to fly, or the fatigue of a long march. To follow Marey's career as laid out in both these books is to chart an image of the widening areas of investigation of nineteenth-century science as it begins to probe the motions of everyday life

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and to intervene in the modern environment with new technologies (flying machines, motion pictures, even the assembly line) which proceeded directly from this new information. Far from mere biographies of an obscure "father" of the motion picture camera, these works provide a vivid image of the concerns that shaped the modern world. Further, we realize how complex the role of vision was in this modern transformation, as Marey provides the perfect perspective from which to view the dialectic between the seen and unseen that modernity involves. Although his own monitoring inventions moved from instruments which abstractly graphed bodily processes (ancestors of modern cardiographs) to photographic images, in both processes it was the "writing" of motion he sought, a simplified data-revealing pattern.

While the books certainly agree on the basic facts and importance of Marey, they are nonetheless very different. This is most obvious in terms of size and scope. Braun's book is a magnum opus, a definitive biography, the fruit of decades of research that is unlikely to be surpassed. Scholarly appendices include catalogues of photographic negatives, films, and experiments, and a bibliography of Marey's work. Braun began her research on the physiologist as new material was surfacing, and one comes away from this book satisfied that Marey's work has been completely and accurately chronicled. In addition, Braun reprints many previously unpublished images of Marey's work. The illustrations provide a feast for the eye and would be sufficient reason to buy the book even if the text were not equally valuable. One has to admire both the thoroughness of Braun's book and the grace with which she moves across disciplines, including physiology, film study, and art history.

If Braun's book is certainly the tome to buy if you want to know everything there is to know about Marey, this does not relegate Dagognet's book to the back shelf. Like many of the Zone books, this volume balances its erudition and insight with considerable charm. The book is much shorter than Braun's (an evening's reading) and therefore supplies a briefer and more compact overview. In some ways this yields a more concise picture of Marey's career, and the three phases into which Dagognet separates his work provide a handy way of revealing the consistent obsessions. The style is allusive and engaging, although at points I suspect translation has rendered it less clear than it could be. A number of technical terms have been translated awkwardly: "objective" instead of "lens," (155) and "toothed device" rather than "sprockets," (163) and I suspect that the odd term "accelerating substances" should really be translated "faster emulsions." (107) Dagognet's book is also a thing of beauty. If sometimes less clear than Braun's, and certainly more limited in the range of its illustrations, it also profits from Zone's wonderful eye for book design.

Both books are enthusiastic about their subjects and can perhaps be forgiven a certain *parti pris*. Braun has quite brilliantly shown the scientific limitations of Muybridge's analysis of motion photographs, and establishes not only the greater seriousness of Marey's photographing of movement but also his more important role in the development of the motion picture camera. Since Marey employed flexible film, there is a direct line between his work and modern cameras, which Muybridge (limited to photographic plates) does not have. However, the delight Braun takes in demolishing Muybridge's reputation takes us back to the arguments of priority in invention that I hoped we had left behind. As Thom Anderson said in his film on Muybridge: After the introduction of roll film any creative mechanic could invent the cinema and many of them did. Interestingly, the perfection of a workable projector eluded Marey (as it did Edison), although his lack of interest in reconstituting motion as entertainment partly explains this.

One of the ironies of Marey's career is the enormous influence his chronophotographs had on the visual arts. While Marey intended his images of animals and humans to correct their representation in realist painting, he would undoubtedly have been astonished at the influence the lines of force traced on his plates had on modernist painting after his death. Braun details both phases of his influence and is particularly brilliant in describing his relation to the Futurists. As Braun shows, the key to Marey's influence was the philosophy of Henri Bergson, who actually attacked the photography of motion as a distortion of our intuitive experience of duration. However, the spectral streaks of motion Marey produced became for the Futurists and other modernists a visual emblem of the temporal experience Bergson described. Dagognet also discusses Marey's relation to the arts, if in less detail, including an insightful discussion of Marey's criticism of Géricault.

Braun's final chapter on Marey's influence on the analysis of work traces his later influence and differentiates between the Marey tradition of investigating fatigue and the American tradition of industrial productivity pioneered by F. W. Taylor. However, I find a major gap in this book's intellectual horizon in not including a consideration of Marey's place in what Foucault calls "the disciplining of the modern body." While it may be too simple to equate the chronophotograph with the panopticon, it seems clear that Marey's investigation of the previously invisible motions of the body forms an important phase in the surveillance and discipline that Foucault describes as our modern legacy. Strangely, Braun never refers to it, although Dagognet alludes to it in his conclusion.

These books are more than reference works for specialists. They reveal the way cinema emerged from the

welter of scientific and positivistic discourses and apparatuses, and a dialectic between the visible and invisible. As such they deserve to be widely read and visually savored.

TOM GUNNING

■ Tom Gunning teaches in the Department of Radio, TV, Film at Northwestern University.

Everything you always wanted to know about Lacan (but were afraid to ask Hitchcock)

Edited by Slavoj Žižek. New York: Routledge/Verso, 1992. $59.95 cloth; $18.95 paper.

In Slavoj Žižek's words, "Hitchcock as the theoretical phenomenon we have witnessed in recent decades—the endless flow of books, articles, university courses, conference panels—is a 'post-modern' phenomenon *par excellence* . . . for true Hitchcock *aficionados* everything has meaning in his films, the seemingly simplest plot conceals unexpected philosophical delicacies." He adds that "this book partakes unrestrainedly in such madness." Indeed it does, to the point of academicizing Hitchcock with a kind of gleeful vengeance. To begin with, much of the Lacanian panoply is out in force—the Imaginary; the Symbolic; the Real; the *objet petit a*; the "stain"; *das Ding*; *Vorstellung-Repräsentanz*; *sinthoms*; the *Unheimlich*; the Will-to-Enjoy; and—of course—the Gaze. Nor is this all. The essays that comprise Žižek's collection are peppered with references for which his (reversible?) title does not always prepare us: references (in no particular order) to Freud, Heidegger, Hamlet, Kant, Galileo, Descartes, Nietzsche, Deleuze, Henry James, Aristotle, Holbein, Racine, Sade, and Aristophanes.

All this might be taken to suggest that Žižek's book is eclectic—as well as heavy going—but to a surprising extent it is neither. Whether it's a voyage into Lacan via Hitchcock or Hitchcock via Lacan is finally unclear; even so, the essays that make up the book never lose sight of Hitchcock's films, some of which are covered very imaginatively indeed. The essays remain disparate, and need Žižek's introductory and concluding contributions to give them whatever coherence they display.

Žižek's overall argument, briefly, is that a threefold distinction obtains in Hitchcock's films. From *The Thirty-nine Steps* to *The Lady Vanishes,* they present a hero's subjectivity strengthened by an ordeal (the journey); from *Rebecca* to *Under Capricorn* they give us the autonomous subject's displacement by a victorious, insipid, heteronymous hero; and from *Strangers on a Train* to *The Birds* they proffer heroes as pathological narcissists incapable of participation in subject formation. To these three types of subjectivity there correspond three types of object: the McGuffin, indifferent in itself but structurally necessary in that it has significance for the characters; the object of exchange circulating among characters (the ring in *Shadow of a Doubt*, the lighter in *Strangers on a Train*; in films based on dualisms, the object of exchange alone has no counterpart, no double); and massive, material, oppressive presences which pose a lethal threat (the landscape in *North by Northwest*, the birds). By the time this sequence has run its course—by the time, in other words, of *Psycho* —"suspense is never the product of a simple physical confrontation between subject and assailant." For this very reason Hitchcock's films are on no account to be confused with the "whodunnit" or the *film noir*. They have moved into a new, uncharted dimension—uncharted, that is, by all except Lacan. This domain is beyond suspense and beyond sadism, as these are normally understood. Increasingly, "the filmic enunciated" (the diegetic content) discloses and indexes its "process of enunciation" (Hitchcock's relationship not with his characters but through these characters with his audience). Hitchcock's orchestration of the viewer's gaze, Žižek insists, is "far more subversive" than may initially appear to be the case. What holds society together is not just identification with the law as Ego-ideal, which regulates its normal, everyday circuit, but identification with the other side of law, its "obscene, superegotistical reverse." In viewing a Hitchcock film, we are led to identify not with the law itself but with a specific form of its transgression or suspension. (This idea was not so much expressed as domesticated by Bakhtin, whose carnivalesques stop short of the lynching mob; as Nietzsche put it—in words Žižek et al. fail to quote but which Hitchcock as well as Lacan might have understood—"what could be more festive than a beheading?")

It is precisely this identification with transgression that is (increasingly) "contaminated beyond cure" by Hitchcock, who does not (as is commonly supposed) play along with it in *Psycho* but utterly subverts it. According to this view, *Psycho* disobeys all the "normal" Hitchcockian rules—it does not rely on the consistency of a symbolic order or on narrative closure—*and* makes perfect sense in Hitchcockian terms. *Psycho* takes us a long way beyond the standard subversion of the idyllic everyday surface of life by the exposure of its dark "reverse." The surface turned inside out had nothing idyllic or even pleasant about it in the first place. American alienation ("financial insecurity, fear of the police,

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Žižek's argument is certainly an arresting one. But not all the contributors to *Everything...* bolster it up very much. The problem here is not eclecticism so much as sheer unevenness. The essays making up the book are subdivided into "The Universal: Themes" (part 1) and "The Particular: Films" (part 2). They vary greatly in quality and relevance. Fredric Jameson's essay on "Spatial Systems in *North by Northwest,*" which deals with only this film and is put into part 1 anyway, presumably because it's so (needlessly) long and woolly, has nothing discernibly Lacanian about it at all. It is counterbalanced to some extent by the more pointed essays by Pascal Bonitzer (on suspense) and Mladen Dolar (on objects), and to a truly considerable extent by Alenka Zupančič's essay on theater in Hitchcock's films, which contains as good a treatment of *Murder!* as I've ever encountered.

The essays in part 2 are if anything even more varied in quality. Some are slight and dispensible (Michel Chion on *The Lady Vanishes*, Pascal Bonitzer on the remake of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*). One, at least, is just plain silly (Chion on *Rear Window*). This suffers badly by comparison not just with Miran Božovič's essay on the same film (which redeems *Rear Window*, fortunately for the argument of the collection as a whole) but also by comparison with Chion's own later essay on *Psycho*. And one (Renata Salecl on *The Wrong Man*, which deserves a place on anyone's Hitchcock reading list) is positively transcendent—and very much to the point of Žižek's eventual argument, which is more than can be said for many of the other contributions. This book deserved tighter editing than Žižek saw fit to provide.

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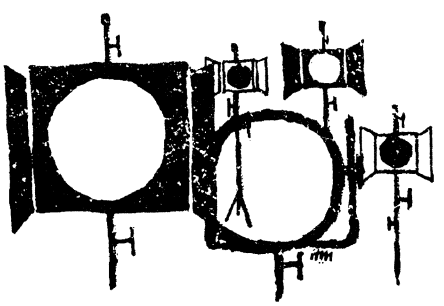

Film and Phenomenology
Toward a Realist Theory of Cinematic Representation

By Allan Casebier. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991. $54.95.

In this ambitious and interesting book Casebier sets himself the task of reorienting film theory toward a realist construal of the medium while attempting to sidestep the pitfalls which have crippled Bazinian realists. Characterizing contemporary film theory as both nominalist—in denying the existence of universals—and idealist—in holding that represented objects are merely spectatorial constructions—he draws on the writings of Husserl to oppose both of these salient features of current theorizing. Films are to be construed not as sites where the spectator constructs meanings by employing codes but as entities having determinate meanings which guide the viewer to the perception of objects existing independently of her interpretive efforts. Casting his net wide, Casebier ensnares not only the usual poststructuralist suspects but also thinkers normally regarded as opponents of poststructuralism (such as David Bordwell) who yet share with their antagonists a constructivism which Casebier argues is fatally flawed.

Casebier's argument against constructivism proceeds by drawing on Husserl's account in *Ideas* of the structure of consciousness, and makes a threefold distinction between the objects of perception, noemata (roughly, the appearances of those objects), and sensa or hyletic data (experiences of shapes, colors, lines, etc.). Constructivists ignore the difference between noemata and the objects of perception and so mistakenly believe that, because the subject's beliefs and experiences influence the constitution of noemata, such factors partly constitute the objects of perception. Applying this doctrine to film, Casebier argues that our beliefs and expectations influence how the filmed objects appear to us but do not themselves determine those objects, whose existence transcends, i.e., is independent of, our interpretive activities. Realist though this claim is, it is yet distinct from the Bazinian position in holding that our epistemic access to these independent entities is mediated by their noemata, and Casebier accordingly rejects the transparency claim that the cinema screen is a mere window through which we view the world of the film.

Thus kitted out with phenomenological weapons, Casebier sallies forth to make the world of film studies safe for realism. Noël Burch is attacked for holding that there is such a thing as the oriental mode of representation; Mary Ann Doane is dispatched for maintaining that

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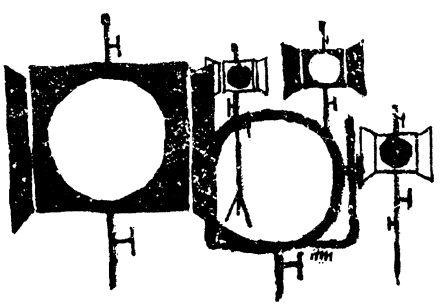

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the dominant cinema constructs a fantasmatic body uniting sound and visuals; David Bordwell is felled for believing in the existence of a constructed fabula and diegesis; and Christian Metz is systematically dismembered for fathering on the world a psychosemiotic theory whose empirical support is as weak as its conceptual structure is confused. Having satisfied himself that he has routed the opposition, Casebier turns to the task of vindicating the realist claims of the documentary, and, in true chivalric fashion, also seeks to liberate the fair maiden of feminism from the threatening embraces of the post-structuralist ogre. Only a realist understanding of the world, he argues, can make sense of the view that the portrayal of women in film is unfaithful to the reality of their predicament.

The virtues of Casebier's project are many. Clearly written and crisply argued, his account of Husserl as a realist presents an attractive alternative to the idealist construal of the philosopher's position which, he shows, has dominated film theory up until now. Though he underplays the Kantian roots of Husserl's theory, which gives the idealist interpretation of the theory more weight than he countenances, there is textual evidence for his realist reading of Husserl, or at least of the Husserl of the early works, *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas*, with which he is chiefly concerned, Casebier also does a good job of dismantling much of the scaffolding which has supported the giddying heights toward which contructivism has recently aspired. That the viewer is intellectually active in understanding a film does not, he correctly argues, show that the film's objects are constructs, for discovery can be an active process. Likewise, the mere existence of gaps, elisions in a film's recounting of narrative events, does not entail that these events are constructs, for again, such gaps call forth the viewer's inferential activities, but the inferences may merely constitute the method of discovering what happened in those gaps. Particularly arresting, given the still hegemonic position of film semiotics, is his onslaught on the views that films are governed by systematic codes.

Systematic code is a generalization which specifies some features of films and holds that all films have, in respect of those features, a certain meaning. Yet the supporter of such codes falls foul of what Casebier calls the total relevance factor, by which any feature, however minor, of a film may bear on its interpretation. The existence of codes would also make it mysterious why one cannot judge the meaning of a film merely from its description, but must instead experience it for oneself. With these and related arguments, Casebier lays down fundamental challenges to a great deal of contemporary film theory.

However, despite the many merits of his book, Casebier's basic theory is flawed. In hacking down the mighty trunk of constructivism so enthusiastically, he fails to notice that a more modest sapling has been growing in its shade. One may reject the view that the fundamental features of films are constructs while believing that construction plays a role in our understanding of films. Casebier is correct in holding that the mere existence of gaps in a film's narrative recounting does not entail that the viewer constructs events, nor does the lack of information about a character's motivations at some point in a film entail that the character's features are spectatorial constructs. But very often the spectator has a legitimate *choice* about how to fill in these gaps, for very different understandings of what happened during the gaps and different readings of a character's motivations are compatible with the information that the film gives to the viewer. Here, then, we may countenance a genuine constructivist role for the viewer, since what features are ascribed to the film's world will properly be subject partly to her discretion. This modest constructivism need not appeal to the existence of codes, but may hold that the viewer constructs these features using contextual features which resist expression by generalizable rules.

A more fundamental problem with Casebier's realism lies in his frequently reiterated claim that viewers perceive the objects and events, even fictional ones, represented by a film. Yet this is impossible: perception is a process involving causal interaction between viewer and object, but fictional objects and events cannot of their nature stand in such causal relations to actual people. His talk of the viewer "apprehending" or "intuiting" or "intending" fictional events does not help either, since the terminology is either vague or does not specify the relation in question in a way that picks it out from conscious processes in general. In fact, the most plausible candidate for the relation is that viewers perceptually imagine such fictional events. The exact way to construe that relation is a major and much discussed problem in contemporary aesthetics.

But any adequate theory of cinematic representation must place imagination firmly at its core, and Casebier's version of realism signally fails to do this. Perhaps his reason for rejecting the role of imagination in representation is that he believes that to countenance it is to embrace constructivism. But this would be a needless worry, for one can hold that works determinately prescribe certain perceptual imaginings, and if the viewer chooses to imagine something different, then she has simply misinterpreted the work. So to acknowledge the role of imagination in representation is not of itself to embrace constructivism.

Though Casebier's positive theory of representation encounters difficulties, his book contains much of value, particularly in its attacks on the ruling positions of contemporary film theory. For this reason, together with its

exemplary clarity and sustained argumentation, it deserves a place on the shelves of anyone seriously interested in advancing the theoretical understanding of film.

BERYS GAUT

■ Berys Gaut teaches philosophy and film at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland.

Fires Were Started
British Cinema and Thatcherism

Edited by Lester Friedman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992. $44.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

From 1982's *Chariots of Fire* through 1992's *Howard's End, Prospero's Books,* and *The Crying Game,* British film has flourished with a diversity and level of aesthetic achievement unmatched since the post-World War II period. That this occurred under Margaret Thatcher's regressive reign (1979–90)—marked by her attempts to unravel the social program of the postwar era, by her devotion to capitalist enterprise and individualistic self-reliance (which resulted in the withdrawal of several crucial supports to the film industry), by her delusions of empire, and by her apotheosizing of "traditional" upper-middle-class, heterosexual values—is something of an enigma. After all, the Reagan-Bush era does not represent a comparable resurgence in American film-making.

Fires Were Started, a superb new anthology edited by Lester Friedman, offers 16 original, lucid, and stimulating attempts to examine the pieces of the puzzle. The virtues of this collection are many. For one thing, it testifies to the different types of films made during the 1980s, within and outside of the commercial mainstream. Manthia Diawara describes the black film collectives which narratively and visually attempted to situate "blackness as a third and hybrid space that can be opposed to the ethnic absolutism of Englishness and other ethnicities in Britain." Antonia Lant offers a detailed overview of the Leeds Animation Workshop, a grass-roots feminist documentary group based in social protest against Thatcher's domestic and military policies. Tony Williams insightfully discusses how the masochistic dimension of gay independent film-maker Terence Davies' *Distant Voices, Still Lives* undercuts Thatcher's attack on the "permissive society" of the 1960s. Michael Walsh demonstrates thoroughly the ambiguous allegorical dimension of Peter Greenaway's experimental avant-garde narratives.

The British commercial narrative film is of course the primary focus for the volume, yet these essays demonstrate how film-makers of every orientation were affected by their historical era. For example, Leonard Quart provides an informative overview of Thatcher's domestic policies and market-oriented values before analyzing the ideological allegiances informing the superficially progressive *Chariots of Fire* and the ambivalences of *High Hopes* and *The Ploughman's Lunch.* Susan Barber provides a point-by-point demonstration of how Stephen Frears' three major successes of the 1980s (*My Beautiful Laundrette, Prick up Your Ears,* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*) spoke to social and economic realities of lower-class London existence. Mary Desjardins ingeniously examines ambiguous representations of infantilizing mothering in John Boorman's *Hope and Glory* and Peter Medak's *The Krays,* and relates them to Thatcher's explicit aim to dismantle the allegedly infantilizing "governess state."

Fires Were Started could easily have been a monotonous and unpersuasive series of attempts to demonstrate the relations between Thatcherism and British film culture. The insight, thoroughness, and eloquence with which virtually every contributor approaches his or her topic makes this book instead a cornucopia of diverse methodologies for relating films to their social and political context. For example, Peter Wollen surveys film modernism in British film history to argue that the 1980s cinema of Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman, "a series of uncompromising films made by original, oppositional, visually oriented modernist auteurs," is the true British New Wave.

In contrast to Wollen, Thomas Elsaesser extends the principle of poststructuralist, meta-historical analysis he so fruitfully applied to the New German Cinema to a discussion of Britain's image culture and its national self-promotion in the 1980s. Andrew Higson builds upon Elsaesser's argument to focus on the "heritage" genre, the quality adaptations and period movies typified by the Merchant/Ivory films. These, Higson argues, construct a national identity through pictorial and manorial splendor that overwhelms the ironies of the source material (the Forster novels) to embody a positive, consumerist value. Meanwhile, Paul Giles provides an industrial analysis of Channel Four's cofinancing of films which have deployed television's predilection for overly familiar narrative formulas and visual icons to evoke the past (as in David Hare's *Wetherby* or David Leland's *Wish You Were Here*), or employed the "limitations" of the small screen in a film like Mike Leigh's *High Hopes* to create a "thematic as well as formal emphasis" "on physical claustrophobia and psychological immobility."

Virtually all of these authors—who include Friedman himself on the British cinema's lack of American popu-

exemplary clarity and sustained argumentation, it deserves a place on the shelves of anyone seriously interested in advancing the theoretical understanding of film.

BERYS GAUT

■ Berys Gaut teaches philosophy and film at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland.

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British Cinema and Thatcherism

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Virtually all of these authors—who include Friedman himself on the British cinema's lack of American popu-

larity, Chris Lippard and Guy Johnson on Derek Jarman, Brian McIlroy on the increasingly critical depictions of the British presence in Northern Ireland, and Jim Leach on the relativistic ethos of Nicolas Roeg's 1980s films—provide insights that extend beyond their specific topics. Hence the Leeds Animation Workshop inspires Antonia Lant to generalize about the advantages of low-budget animation for making local agitprop, and Barry Grant's recuperation of Ken Russell highlights his transcendence of the realism/tinsel opposition that has structured much of the British industry's self-image.

There are of course points that are debatable in these essays (to take just two examples: Can the work of two film-makers add up to a British New Wave? Do the heritage films really partake of the cinema of attractions?). But such questions are only more evidence of how thought-provoking these well-illustrated and cogently argued articles are. They add up to a stimulating textbook and a major resource for future discussion. Far from providing a static fix on the period, *Fires Were Started* conveys a sense of process and negotiation among several excellent scholars and critics that invites the reader to participate. In this, they are not unlike the films they address.

MATTHEW BERNSTEIN

■ Matthew Bernstein teaches at Emory University.

Gunfighter Nation
The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America
By Richard Slotkin. New York: Atheneum, 1992. $40.00.

This impressive book is the conclusion to Richard Slotkin's magisterial trilogy on the mythology of violence in American history, and its impact on ideology and the American self-concept. The first book, *Regeneration Through Violence*, published two decades ago, demonstrated how a notion of the Other (often centered on Native Americans) was fashioned in colonial America from a variety of traditions and mythologies. This concept, which infiltrated popular culture at various times and at various levels of consciousness, became part of a national racialist ideology, one used to demonize and marginalize a wide variety of groups and ideas obstructing the white, patriarchal, and expansionist policies of the early nation. This first book, now widely used by a variety of scholars, also developed Slotkin's pivotal "regeneration through violence" thesis that has become extremely influential in cultural studies of the past 20 years. According to this theory, American civilization has been influenced since its inception by a myth valorizing sacrificial bloodshed, a myth reinforced by dominant ideology. During periods of local or national strife, the population could become galvanized against a designated Other; blood sacrifice in the interest of destroying the Other would have a purgative, redemptive effect, and would further ennoble the collective purpose. This myth, obviously derived from Christianity, would also divert the population from tangible social and economic problems.

In his second book, *The Fatal Environment*, Slotkin used the image of Custer's Last Stand as a central emblem in a complex model of explanation for regenerative violence forming a powerful national mythology in nineteenth-century America.

In *Gunfighter Nation*, Slotkin shows the usefulness of regenerative violence to twentieth-century popular and political culture. Slotkin begins with two pivotal *fin-de-siècle* documents: Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (known popularly as the "frontier thesis") and Theodore Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West*. From these works, Slotkin extrapolates his major argument. Even before the closing of the American frontier at the turn of the century, the idea of the frontier became important not so much to the specific ambition of conquering territory as for its potency as a symbol of infinite possibility. In short, the frontier became engrained in this nation's collective experience as a symbol of the idea of progress, of new potentials for spiritual, moral, and physical renewal (at whatever price). Slotkin argues early in the book that John F. Kennedy's evocation of a "New Frontier" at mid-century, after a World War and a decade of what was represented as sedentary stagnation under a rather tired, staid Republican regime, proved the centrality of the frontierist ethic not only to new political adventurism (the rise of counterinsurgency) but also to a broad range of popular culture ("Star Trek"'s use of the "final frontier" idea) which in turn reinforced ideology.

Slotkin has always paid close attention to this popular culture, and inasmuch as he is involved in his book with the twentieth century, most of this work is concerned with the electronic media, and the cinema in particular. As the frontier experience ends, Slotkin notes that the Western becomes, not ironically, the preeminent genre at the early moments of the cinema (*The Great Train Robbery*). The idealized representation of the frontier as seen through the eyes of the white male minority remained important to the reinvigoration of the country at times of low morale; William F. (Buffalo Bill) Cody's Wild West shows and his restagings of Custer's Last Stand are the locus classicus for the frontier experience as spectacle, hence its transmogrification into the "Western." By the early 1960s,

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the Western was not only the most endemically American genre for its sympathetic telling of the frontier adventure but also the most popular, with a number of important (conservative) Hollywood directors closely identified with it, and with dozens of Western adventure serials dominating early television.

Much of Slotkin's book is devoted to analyses of the key Westerns and their relationship to historical moments of the postwar period. Slotkin's substantial essays on *Stagecoach*, Ford's cavalry trilogy, *Shane*, *The Gunfighter*, *High Noon*, *The Searchers*, *The Alamo*, *The Magnificent Seven*, and *The Wild Bunch* are written more from a literary than a film studies standpoint, but the value of this supple, finely nuanced, and historically and ideologically informed criticism is manifest. In many instances, Slotkin's observations far outshine some of the standard texts on the Western on which he is obviously dependent. His reflections on John Wayne's *The Alamo*, a rather underanalyzed but pivotal film released on the eve of the 1960 election, show not just Slotkin's acute understanding of the conventions of popular genres but the role of genre in mediating specific inflections in ideology. A populist, anti-authoritarian ideology is suggested in Wayne's Davy Crockett and Richard Widmark's Jim Bowie, who represent the idea that a plainspoken statement of the facts is sufficient to rally the common folk in opposition to an enemy. By contrast, Laurence Harvey's William Barrett Travis, a foppish, Hobbesian demagogue with open contempt for the Jeffersonian ideal of democracy, believes that the brainless mob must be fooled into acting in its own best interests. Slotkin shows how the outlooks of Crockett and Travis coincide, although Crockett's common touch seems to pay heed to democratic principles. This film, an epic retelling of the most cherished Last Stand saga before the Custer legend took hold, resonates, according to the author, the profoundly reactionary politics of covert action (hiding behind a democratic face) that would be the essence of the Vietnam era. What is most unsettling about this ideology and its reflection in films such as *The Alamo* is its nascent presence in populist politics throughout American history.

The book's title has an important relationship to Slotkin's sense of the Western, particularly in its manifestation after World War II. The gunfighter, rather than, say, the frontiersman or Indian-fighter, becomes the major figure of the postwar Western. That an alienated, professional killer, who sometimes harbors a "dark" past, who is occasionally a revenger but most often a mercenary, becomes a central hero of the genre suggests to Slotkin the singularly amoral, pragmatic, and essentially powerless outlook of the populace in the Cold War era. Slotkin's superlative essays on *The Magnificent Seven* and *The Wild Bunch*, in many ways companion pieces in this book, demonstrate the relevance (and the failure) of the gunfighter ethos to American interventionist policies of the 1960s. Sturgis's *The Magnificent Seven* becomes a continuation of a long meditation on U.S. relations with Mexico and a valorization both of the gunfighter/mercenary and of the necessity of U.S. intervention in third-world wars of national liberation. By 1969, the Western tells a different story, with *The Wild Bunch*'s inflections on the gunfighter/mercenary reflecting the futility and bankruptcy of the "destroy-a-village-in-order-to-save-it" rationales of Vietnam policy. *The Wild Bunch* suggests what Slotkin terms "a demoralization of America," as the Vietnam debacle unravelled the public myths embodied in the Western that were so crucial to the American civilizing experience, myths that had to be reinvigorated in the neoconservative Reagan/Bush epoch even as the Western died, its utopian ideals seen as naïve and obsolete. Slotkin argues convincingly that the Western simply reappeared in the disguises of other genres, from science fiction to the crime film, and always in political discourse ("Showdown in the Gulf").

There is much more going on in Slotkin than I have touched on. He is that rare type of historiographer who combines old-fashioned spadework (his voluminous footnotes contain references to the Congressional Record, to dime novels, to standard biographies of historical figures, to contemporary news accounts of frontier episodes) with solid theorization. His comments on the earliest William S. Hart Westerns, on Wyatt Earp's self-mythologizing during his last days in Los Angeles, and on the cult of John Wayne that has become so deeply entrenched in American culture are remarks that help make this book a great resource. If Slotkin falters, it is probably because of the tremendous ambition of his enterprise. By the end of this book he relies a bit much on a one-to-one correlation of films to specific historical moments and U.S. policy changes. It is one thing to suggest that a Western reflects variations in ideology, another to talk about it specifically in the context of Edward Lansdale's counterinsurgency projects, although this kind of discussion too is highly engaging. And although it is reasonable to understand John F. Kennedy as a committed Cold Warrior, is it fair to speak about him in the same breath as John Wayne? Kennedy had one or two progressive impulses, and certainly Wayne and his acolytes always had contempt for all things Kennedy. Slotkin makes this type of comparison quite often, occasionally causing him to seem somewhat doctrinaire.

Slotkin's methodology has at times aggravated some. While his syncretism is a real strength, his notion of myth has, in the course of this trilogy, been almost too inclusive, drawing on Barthes, Lévi-Strauss, Frankfurt School theory, and other, sometimes disparate, thinkers. Slotkin's notion of mass culture engendering false consciousness, and of myth replacing history in the public mind, becomes

clear as he goes along, but his sense of the origins of mythic speech and the ways by which myth operates in different technological eras can become lost as the author involves himself so intensively in his analyses. Still, *Gunfighter Nation* is a wholly satisfactory ending to an extraordinary project, one that will continue to prove its usefulness to numerous disciplines.

CHRISTOPHER SHARRETT

■ Christopher Sharrett teaches at Seton Hall University.

Hitchcock
The Making of a Reputation
By Robert Kapsis. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. $45.00 cloth; $16.95 paper.

To Claude Chabrol and Eric Rohmer, Alfred Hitchcock was a moralist. Charles Thomas Samuels called him a "primitive" film director, an unrelenting manipulator of audience emotions. In the title of his biography, Donald Spoto labeled him a "genius," albeit a troubled one. C.A. Lejeune wrote that in watching Hitchcock's *Psycho,* she "grew so sick and tired of the whole beastly business" that she walked out of the screening before it was over. Less than a half decade later, Robin Wood called the same film "one of the key works of our age."

As these perspectives indicate, the films of Alfred Hitchcock have generated widely disparate responses since he first solidified his reputation in the 1930s as a skilled director of popular thrillers like *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The Lady Vanishes*, and *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. Between the 1950s and 1970s, the critical consensus about Hitchcock shifted from the opinion that the rotund director was a slick purveyor of entertaining thrillers to a view that he was a serious artist devoted to "pure cinema" and the insightful representation of psychological dilemmas. In fact, Hitchcock's reputation has risen so much that he was ranked fourth on the list of top ten directors in the 1992 *Sight and Sound* poll of international film critics. Robert E. Kapsis here takes up the challenge of studying the evolving response to Hitchcock's films in the United States.

Kapsis, a scholar from Queens College in New York, draws on sociologist Howard Becker's notion of "art world" to help structure his study. Becker argues that artistic reputations shift over time, and that they emerge and evolve through a process of discussion and debate by critics, artists, and audiences in the relevant "art world" in which the artist works. In his introduction Kapsis writes, "My subject . . . is the creation of reputation in the art world of film, and I use Alfred Hitchcock's career and legacy as a genre director and film auteur as a case study." (2)

The book is divided into two major sections. The first section offers an overview of Hitchcock's early career and then traces in considerable detail the changes in Hitchcock's reputation between the 1950s and the present. Kapsis discovers that although Hitchcock consciously set about trying to elevate his artistic reputation in the early 1960s, it wasn't until auteur criticism became dominant in the later 1960s and early 1970s that his efforts began to succeed. In making his case in this section of the book, Kapsis draws on an impressively broad range of resources: Hitchcock's papers at the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences; François Truffaut's taped interviews with Hitchcock, which eventually resulted in the publication of Truffaut's interview book, *Hitchcock*; speeches Hitchcock made over the years; fan mail he received; hundreds of American and British reviews of Hitchcock films; and dozens of scholarly books and articles on Hitchcock in particular and film studies in general.

The second part of the study discusses Hitchcock's legacy since his death, bringing in considerations of genre and authorship. One chapter examines the influence of Hitchcock on the slasher films of the early 1980s and the adult thrillers of the late 1980s like *Fatal Attraction*. Another concentrates on the career of Brian de Palma, who for a time was working almost exclusively in the thriller genre and was often touted as Hitchcock's heir in that realm. Kapsis here makes the interesting argument that Hitchcock's preeminence in the thriller genre actually hindered de Palma's attempts to establish an artistic reputation because critics often compared his films unfavorably to Hitchcock's. The overview of de Palma's reception history in this chapter thus provides one comparison to the shifts in Hitchcock's reputation. The final chapter, in its briefer examinations of the careers of Hawks, Capra, Fritz Lang, and Clint Eastwood, offers more comparisons and contrasts to consider how reputations rise and fall in the art world of film.

Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation is a stimulating if not always convincing book. It is certainly the most extensive treatment of the complex and difficult process through which Hitchcock became considered by many a serious artist in the cinema rather than a skilled maker of lightweight entertainments. The chapters on Hitchcock's legacy also provided an intriguing perspective on how the reputation of a canonized director and his achievements in a particular genre live on after the film-maker's death.

My main criticism of the book has less to do with the details of the case study of Hitchcock, which is solid and impressive, than with one limitation of the "art world"

clear as he goes along, but his sense of the origins of mythic speech and the ways by which myth operates in different technological eras can become lost as the author involves himself so intensively in his analyses. Still, *Gunfighter Nation* is a wholly satisfactory ending to an extraordinary project, one that will continue to prove its usefulness to numerous disciplines.

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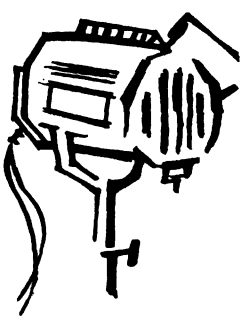
approach as it is used in the book to explain film genres and directorial reputations. Kapsis offers the approach as an alternative to what he calls the "reflection of society perspective" (3) in cultural production. The art-world perspective, he writes, proposes that "the impact of the audience (or wider society) on the production of genre films is ultimately quite modest compared to the inputs from other more active members of the film art-world such as directors, marketing executives, and even film journalists who cooperate to bring such films and their categorizations into existence." (6)

On the one hand, Kapsis is right. Those involved in the art world of the film industry—producers, directors, screenwriters, stars, marketing staff, and critics—are central to the establishment and continuation of film genres. However, I would argue that broader social factors also play a significant part in the rise and fall of film genres, as Kapsis himself admits when he notes that the growing antiwar mood in the United States helps to explain the sentiment against James Bond films from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. (105) Similarly, the rise of combat films during World War II, of youth films in the late 1960s, and *of Rambo*-esque, revisionary Vietnam films in the early 1980s were related to broad social and political factors. Instead of defining the art-world approach as an alternative to the broader social approach, I would propose that film genres (and the reputations of directors) are surrounded by two concentric circles—the first the "art world" of film, and the second the broader culture and society within which it functions. Both affect the rise and fall of film genres *and* the evolving reputations of film directors.

This observation is not, however, to detract from the genuine achievements of *Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation*. In it, Robert Kapsis teaches us much about Hitchcock's shifting reputation and continuing legacy, and by systematically and imaginatively showing how the notion of the art world may apply to cinema studies, he challenges us to continue refining our understanding of how film production and reception change over time.

CHARLES MALAND

■ Charles Maland teaches at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville.



Hollywood's Overseas Campaign
The North Atlantic Movie Trade, 1920–1950

By Ian Jarvie. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992. $65.00.

Contrary to the implication of its title, this book is not about film distribution but about high policy. Using official documents found in national, state, and university archives in Canada, Great Britain, and the United States, Jarvie analyzes the responses of the Canadian and British governments to Hollywood's domination of their nations' screens and Hollywood's strategies to combat protectionism. The book is organized by market. Part 1 examines Canada, particularly the government's investigation of Famous Players Canadian Corporation for monopolistic practices in 1930 (the White Report). Part 2 examines Great Britain, particularly the political discourse surrounding the Cinematograph Films Acts of 1927 and 1938 and the ad valorem duty on film imports (the Dalton Duty) in 1947. Part 3 discusses the response of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (the Hays Office) to these protective measures, particularly the American film boycott of Great Britain and the Anglo-American Film Agreement of 11 March, 1948, that concluded the controversy.

Attempting to answer why American films dominated the North Atlantic film trade, Jarvie dismisses the "media imperialism" thesis of influential Marxist historians such as F. D. Klingender, Stuart Legg, and Thomas Guback, along with explanations based on demand (i.e., audience preferences) argued by John Grierson, Jeffrey Richards, and Peter Stead. His thesis is "that the domination of the international trade in films by the U.S. film industry was the result of entrepreneurship in the arena of supply." Jarvie's argument is familiar and goes something like this: The disruption of Europe's film industries during World War I marked the beginning of Hollywood's control of world film markets. Taking advantage of the economies of scale of vertical integration and an affluent domestic market, Hollywood produced a continuous flow of popular films that recouped their production costs at home and were regularly undersold abroad. The transition to sound threatened Hollywood's hegemony, but the industry quickly reasserted itself and kept the competition overseas in a subordinate position. Although the majors' grip on exhibition made it nearly impossible for foreign film-makers to penetrate the domestic market, Hollywood advocated free trade and worked through the Hays Office, the Department of State, the Department of Commerce, and the U.S. Foreign Service to ensure that

approach as it is used in the book to explain film genres and directorial reputations. Kapsis offers the approach as an alternative to what he calls the "reflection of society perspective" (3) in cultural production. The art-world perspective, he writes, proposes that "the impact of the audience (or wider society) on the production of genre films is ultimately quite modest compared to the inputs from other more active members of the film art-world such as directors, marketing executives, and even film journalists who cooperate to bring such films and their categorizations into existence." (6)

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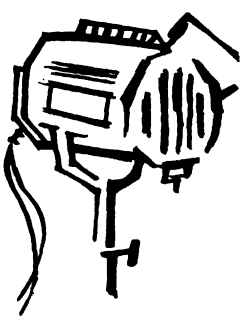

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the channels of distribution remained open for American films overseas.

Canada, Hollywood's principal foreign market in North America, never formulated a clear policy of protectionism in response to American films and, as Jarvie puts it, "merely patrolled the edges of the trading floor." Hollywood owned or controlled the principal theaters and treated the country as an extension of its domestic market. New films were released in sync with the United States and found their way to theaters through the use of such common trade practices as runs-clearances-zones, block booking, and blind buying.

Great Britain, Hollywood's largest overseas market, was "divided against itself." Powerful elements of Britain's elite, together with certain producers and craft unions, favored quotas, financial assistance for British producers, and reciprocity in the American film market, with the goal of creating a second Hollywood on the Thames. British exhibitors, on the other hand, favored an open market, and rightly so, since their livelihoods depended on a steady supply of American films.

Concentrating on the ruling elite, Jarvie uncovers the cultural and political biases that influenced much of Britain's film policy. Throughout the 30 years covered by this book, Members of Parliament and ranking government officials advocated protectionism by invoking such sentiments as "Movies involve 'high national and patriotic interests'; 'no one . . . can be in any doubt' about their 'immense importance' as 'a subtle means of propaganda,' propaganda that is 'neither healthy nor patriotic' and that has 'far-reaching' psychological 'consequences.'" Never fully scrutinized at the time, these notions sometimes masked not only a contempt for popular entertainment, but also a fear of the rising geopolitical influence of the United States and a fear of the potential influence of American films on a vast new common electorate. According to Jarvie, Hollywood films may have rankled bigwigs for the following reasons:

> Slapstick comedy ridiculed authority figures, from policemen to the clergy; business and political elites were frequently portrayed as unscrupulous and corrupt; an atmosphere of egalitarianism and opportunity for all was pervasive; and narratives often achieved closure only by the efforts of an individual hero, acting in the spirit but not the letter of the law. There was no place for deference and respect to those set over us; no natural social station where ordinary people would find unambitious contentment. (108)

Jarvie emphasizes repeatedly that the advice of the British public was neither heard nor sought by the establishment on these matters. However, moviegoers voted with their ticket purchases and undoubtedly would have favored an open market, since they rarely chose their own country's films over Hollywood's.

Jarvie also reveals the insignificant role of motion picture economics in the creation of British film policy. The dream of a second Hollywood on the Thames (that is, of a British film industry effectively challenging Hollywood) was sustained by a blindness to the entrenched position of the American film industry in its own market, by a blindness to American audience tastes, and by a blindness to the drawing power of American stars. As a result, Britain invested and lost millions producing so-called culturally worthwhile films that at best established only a toehold in the United States.

Ignoring the audience and the international motion picture market had dire consequences for Britain's management of its film industry. By placing Britain's film policies in relief and also by suggesting Hollywood's probable reactions to these policies, Jarvie has made a real contribution to our understanding of the international film trade. However, the impact of his research is blunted by the structure of his argument. Jarvie charts a tedious, repetitious, and sometimes confusing course through three decades of film policy first in Canada, then in Great Britain, and finally in the United States. The manuscript might have been more effectively organized to follow a strictly chronological course highlighting Hollywood's campaign to combat protectionism overseas as it occurred.

The discussion should also have been placed in a clearer historical context. Jarvie praises Hollywood's entrepreneurial skills, but he is vague about industrial structure (e.g., economies of scale of vertical integration); he also simplifies issues (e.g., the industry's accommodation of television), ignores relevant research (e.g., the implementation of the Production Code), and occasionally gets his facts wrong (e.g., Alexander Korda's partnership in United Artists).

More seriously, Jarvie "gives short shrift to the films," as he puts it. He acknowledges the popularity of Hollywood films and concentrates on high policy, but high policy divorced from the marketplace is a dry subject indeed. We yearn to know which Hollywood films and stars were popular in Great Britain, how American firms functioned in the country, and how these firms marketed their product. On such matters, Jarvie is silent.

TINO BALIO

■ Tino Balio teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Male Subjectivity at the Margins

By Kaja Silverman. New York: Routledge, 1992. $55.00 cloth; $17.95 paper.

Male Subjectivity at the Margins is an extremely important book that intersects several current issues in film theory, particularly work on masculinity and the male body and, relatedly, masochism. The book is ambitious in scope and provocative. Silverman explores what she terms "deviant" masculinities which offer "perverse" alternatives to normative phallic masculinity. These non-phallic masculinities relate to what she perceives as an historic collapse within dominant ideology's alignment of the penis with the phallus. She argues that the disjuncture of those two terms has caused a crisis within the entire "dominant fiction" and that it is an "urgent" task for feminism to study non-phallic sexualities. As in her previous work, Silverman relies heavily upon Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis for her methodology.

The book is organized theoretically; each section includes close analysis of individual texts ranging from the films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder to *The Best Years of Our Lives* and from the writings of Marcel Proust and Henry James to T. E. Lawrence. The topics Silverman covers include race, class, and history as well as gender and sexuality. Indeed, the back cover of the book classifies it as "Gender Studies/Criticism/Film," and the number and ordering of the categories reveals just how interdisciplinary the book is. This also raises the question whether this is indeed primarily a film studies book and, if so, what that tells us about a major portion of the field as it is currently evolving.

The book is divided into four sections. In "Ideology and Masculinity," Silverman discusses the dominant fiction in terms of the alignment of the penis/phallus, the notion of the adequacy of the male subject, and the unity of the family. She then gives a reading of *The Best Years of Our Lives* which centers around male lack and which contributes a significant new perspective on a much written-about film. In "The Gaze and the Look," she argues that the relationship between the eye and the gaze is like that between the penis and the phallus; the male subject can never possess the gaze or the phallus. She then analyzes several Fassbinder films with reference to the manner in which the specularization of the de-phallicized male body points to the lack at the center of male subjectivity. In "Masochism," she explores moral, Christian, and feminine masochism and gives a detailed reading of Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, a film which she characterizes as an uncompromisingly bleak, masochistic portrait of male lack and castration. The final section, "Libidinal Politics," analyzes the writings of T. E. Lawrence in terms of reflexive masochism, which, in contrast to feminine masochism, involves an active rather than passive position and appears excessively virile. Her reading emphasizes Lawrence's homosexuality and masochism in relation to his identification with the Arabs. In the last chapter, devoted to femininity in male homosexuality, Silverman discusses different models of homosexuality and explores alternatives to homosexuality centered on phallic penetration.

Silverman's heavy reliance upon a particular psychoanalytic model at times leads to an inflexibility in terms of analyzing both artistic and theoretical texts. Without even naming her in the text, she condescendingly dismisses Gaylyn Studlar's important work on masochism and the films of Josef von Sternberg in a brief footnote. Studlar's work is characterized by a much broader field of psychoanalytic reference than the usual film theory reliance upon Freud and Lacan which Silverman's work typifies. Studlar's emphasis on the pre-oedipal bond between the infant and the powerful mother of the oral phase deserves much more serious consideration. Silverman assumes that she need only apply and critique Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis within the perspective of the feminist literature on it. Indeed, at one point she refers to Jane Gallop's reading of the mirror phase and then adopts it herself, noting that there are "compelling advantages of such a reading." Since Gallop relocates the mirror phase from the usual age of six to eighteen months and understands it retroactively, it is certainly relevant to wonder about the evidence supporting such a shift. Furthermore, Studlar's rereading of Sternberg's films contributes a major new perspective on them in, ironically, much the same manner that Silverman's reading does with Fassbinder's films. Furthermore, the masochism that Studlar convincingly identifies in Sternberg's films does not fit with any of the various patterns of masochism that Silverman identifies and describes. It is certainly possible that the many different types of masochism do not all have their origin in the same phase of psychoanalytic development.

Silverman's writing style at times betrays a similar condescension toward her readers and overinflates the logic of her argument. She frequently addresses the reader as if he/she will be a step ahead of her in perceiving what she takes to be the inevitable, tight logic of her argument. There are too many times when she says or implies "of course," and suggests that things are obvious when the "of course" overstates the case and when the obvious may only be so to one who has recently spent an inordinate amount of time with the materials Silverman refers to.

Film studies are currently polarizing between those who work from within a strict disciplinary sense of the

field and those, like Silverman, who bring an interdisciplinary perspective to it. Unfortunately, this polarization frequently leads each side to virtually dismiss or disparage the work of the other. A book as substantive as *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* should be given serious attention by all film scholars, not just those with a primary interest in gender studies or psychoanalytic film theory.

PETER LEHMAN

■ Peter Lehman, author of *Running Scared: Masculinity and the Representation of the Human Body,* teaches at the University of Arizona.

Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo
Japanese Cinema under the American Occupation, 1945–1952

By Kyoko Hirano. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992. $34.95.

Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: Japanese Cinema under the American Occupation is the first in-depth study of this subject in English and has been well worth waiting for. Ms. Hirano's book is an invaluable and much needed reference tool not just for specialists in film studies but for all historians of modern Japan. In recent years, interest in this critical period of Japanese history has begun to resurface among U.S. historians. One work that comes to mind as exemplary is Richard Finn's *Winners in Peace: MacArthur, Yoshida and Postwar Japan* (1992). While Finn's well-researched study focuses on policy-making and deliberations during the Occupation, Hirano fills out the picture (as it were) by showing how cinema history reflects Japan's postwar modernization, with all its difficulties of new constitution, land reform, war trials, and dissolution of *zaibatsu*.

Hirano's work also fills in an important gap in the scholarship of Japanese cinema history in English. Even though the last decade has seen a steady increase in scholarly publications on Japanese cinema in the West, very little attention has been paid to the films made during the Occupation. Until now, scholars have had to rely on two more general surveys. *The Japanese Film: Art and Film Industry* (revised in 1982), by Donald Richie and Joseph Anderson, includes discussion of the Japanese cinema industry's postwar transformation. Tadao Sato's *Currents in Japanese Cinema* (1982, originally published in Japanese in 1976) offers a chapter on representative Occupation films.

Naturally, Hirano modifies and expands her predecessors' work as she charts new territory, then explores it with exemplary thoroughness and insight. She has much to say about the close and often complex interactions between politics and film, as matters of censorship and policy shape (or misshape) creative work. Her research draws on a vast accumulation of resources, most of it not yet touched even by Japanese scholars (including a mountain of unpublished official documentation held in the National Archives). She also interviewed more than 30 Japanese film-makers and critics (some now deceased). No wonder a fifth of her book is taken up by the 76-page section of notes and bibliography.

Her eight chapters of text do the critical work of exploring "both the continuity and the changes in cultural and social values" revealed in Japanese films made during the Occupation period. The opening chapter offers a general survey of major changes in the Japanese film industry from wartime to postwar period. The other seven chapters explore her theme: how the American Occupation molded the postwar Japanese cinema industry through the complex relations (mostly conflicting) between two censorship organizations: the CIE (Civil Information and Education Section) of the Occupation government and the CCD (Civil Censorship Detachment) under the direct control of military intelligence. She shows quite clearly how the presence of those two forces affected subjects and themes treated by Occupation cinema.

One highlight of this story shows how more was at stake than America's genuine interest in seeing Japan develop along democratic lines similar to her own. Hirano devotes a chapter to the strikes at Toho Studio (1946–48) by way of showing how one Occupation high ideal might be seen as yielding to Cold War politics emanating from a capital half a world away from Tokyo. Though her basic critical framework is historical, Hirano uses close contextual analysis of two important films to bolster her case. One is Fumio Kamei's *Nihon no Higeki* (*The Japanese Tragedy*, 1946), and the other is Akira Kurosawa's *Waga Seishun ni Kui Nashi* (*No Regrets for Our Youth*, 1946). Her work complements earlier Japanese scholarship, shedding new light on the nature of Occupation policies as reflected in the films with the use of actual Japanese screenplays submitted to the CIE and CCD, along with memorandums and unofficial documents. She also advances another provocative thesis, namely, that "Despite what one may expect, occupation period films and wartime films alike were substantially apolitical." According to Hirano, the reason behind this is that the former lacked the clear presentation of what democratic values are and the latter "avoided clear statements or representations of what the Japanese were fighting for."

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consider a prime example of postwar democratic advocacy. Hirano argues that neither the heroine Yukie's motives for self-sacrifice nor the "democratic" ideals for which her father and husband are sacrificed are sufficiently explained, either in wartime or in the traumatic postwar period. Even more valuable in this chapter is the film's production history—the subtle interplay of conflicting politics directly influencing the content of the director's work. For example, the Toho Studio demanded that certain politically charged lines be deleted from the opening titles lest they be construed as a personal attack on a political leader of the Liberal Party. The CIE, meantime, plumped for the film's theme of agrarian reform. After all, that was a key Occupation policy—a newly created, modernized farming class which land reform had freed from the yoke of land owners.

But the most impressive new area of understanding opened up in Hirano's book is her case study of the leftist Fumio Kamei's *The Japanese Tragedy*. This film is used as the centerpiece of chapter 3, "The Depiction of the Emperor." In discussing it—the only film actually banned during the Occupation and one of a few highly politically charged films of the period—Hirano shows how the director approached a subject that was sensitive then (as it can still be today) and, as such, was well calculated to test the subtle balance of power between CIE, CCD, and political pressure generally. Using a deft combination of historical and formal analyses, Hirano illustrates complex processes of production and censorship connected with this ill-fated film (after repeated demands for revisions and deletions, the Japanese Government finally suppressed the film entirely as being "unsuitable for public consumption). She also makes important use of an interview with the film-maker himself (who has only recently begun to receive long overdue critical attention in his home country), and of her own correspondence with Toshio Tokumitsu, the production manager of the film.

Stimulating and fascinating as Hirano's study is, some readers might find themselves wishing for close readings of more major films produced in the Occupation period. But many a scholar will heave a sigh of relief to read a book so accessible in its style, so concise and so lucid. In *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo,* Kyoko Hirano has written a definitive primer on the films of the Occupation, a critical interval in modern world and Japanese history.

KEIKO MCDONALD

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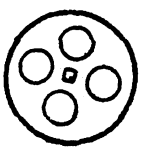

New Australian Cinema
Sources and Parallels in American and British Film

By Brian McFarlane and Geoff Mayer. London: Cambridge University Press, 1992. $49.95 cloth; $18.95 paper.

It is generally agreed that in 1975, with the release of Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and Ken Annakin's *Sunday Too Far Away,* the Australian cinema found itself on the crest of a "new wave" (although McFarlane and Mayer in this unevenly useful volume more cogently prefer the term "boom"). It is further generally agreed that one problem always faced by the Australian cinema was the competition from Hollywood, and, as McFarlane and Mayer also remind us, from Great Britain. And it is also well established that within the context of the Australian New Wave, the question of what constitutes an Australian cinema was hotly debated in print and on the screen.

In *New Australian Cinema*, the authors, both faculty members in Australian universities (McFarlane is the author of two earlier, and frankly better, books on Australian cinema), do not in any way dispute these givens. Instead they try to refine them. Thus, the situation of the Australian cinema is compared to that of Great Britain in terms of these cinemas' chronic inability to compete with the commercial juggernaut of Hollywood. And just as the British cinema experienced a moment of commercial and artistic success and viability in the period just after the Second World War through the early 1950s, so, too, the Australian cinema had a boom period in the middle 1970s until the early 1980s. More to the point, the authors try to bring specificity to the question of the "Australianness" of Australian cinema by comparisons between it and the two cinemas it has been caught between—the American and the British.

The Australian cinema shares with the British cinema the problems of most national cinemas, especially English-speaking ones: of competing in their own country with popular American films; of covering production costs of national product by the national audience; and of trying to break into the mainstream American theatrical market. Britain and Australia relied on direct government intervention to try and maintain a home-grown industry, from a quota system to direct financing of feature films to tax breaks for investors. The authors contend that British films successfully competed with American imports during the period they term "high British cinema": the documentary- and literary-influenced films of directors like David Lean, Carol Reed, and Anthony Asquith, which seem to "reflect and examine and celebrate the feeling of a new consensual impulse and activity in the

consider a prime example of postwar democratic advocacy. Hirano argues that neither the heroine Yukie's motives for self-sacrifice nor the "democratic" ideals for which her father and husband are sacrificed are sufficiently explained, either in wartime or in the traumatic postwar period. Even more valuable in this chapter is the film's production history—the subtle interplay of conflicting politics directly influencing the content of the director's work. For example, the Toho Studio demanded that certain politically charged lines be deleted from the opening titles lest they be construed as a personal attack on a political leader of the Liberal Party. The CIE, meantime, plumped for the film's theme of agrarian reform. After all, that was a key Occupation policy—a newly created, modernized farming class which land reform had freed from the yoke of land owners.

But the most impressive new area of understanding opened up in Hirano's book is her case study of the leftist Fumio Kamei's *The Japanese Tragedy*. This film is used as the centerpiece of chapter 3, "The Depiction of the Emperor." In discussing it—the only film actually banned during the Occupation and one of a few highly politically charged films of the period—Hirano shows how the director approached a subject that was sensitive then (as it can still be today) and, as such, was well calculated to test the subtle balance of power between CIE, CCD, and political pressure generally. Using a deft combination of historical and formal analyses, Hirano illustrates complex processes of production and censorship connected with this ill-fated film (after repeated demands for revisions and deletions, the Japanese Government finally suppressed the film entirely as being "unsuitable for public consumption). She also makes important use of an interview with the film-maker himself (who has only recently begun to receive long overdue critical attention in his home country), and of her own correspondence with Toshio Tokumitsu, the production manager of the film.

Stimulating and fascinating as Hirano's study is, some readers might find themselves wishing for close readings of more major films produced in the Occupation period. But many a scholar will heave a sigh of relief to read a book so accessible in its style, so concise and so lucid. In *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo,* Kyoko Hirano has written a definitive primer on the films of the Occupation, a critical interval in modern world and Japanese history.

KEIKO MCDONALD

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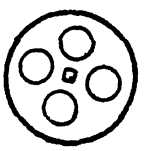

New Australian Cinema
Sources and Parallels in American and British Film

By Brian McFarlane and Geoff Mayer. London: Cambridge University Press, 1992. $49.95 cloth; $18.95 paper.

It is generally agreed that in 1975, with the release of Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and Ken Annakin's *Sunday Too Far Away,* the Australian cinema found itself on the crest of a "new wave" (although McFarlane and Mayer in this unevenly useful volume more cogently prefer the term "boom"). It is further generally agreed that one problem always faced by the Australian cinema was the competition from Hollywood, and, as McFarlane and Mayer also remind us, from Great Britain. And it is also well established that within the context of the Australian New Wave, the question of what constitutes an Australian cinema was hotly debated in print and on the screen.

In *New Australian Cinema*, the authors, both faculty members in Australian universities (McFarlane is the author of two earlier, and frankly better, books on Australian cinema), do not in any way dispute these givens. Instead they try to refine them. Thus, the situation of the Australian cinema is compared to that of Great Britain in terms of these cinemas' chronic inability to compete with the commercial juggernaut of Hollywood. And just as the British cinema experienced a moment of commercial and artistic success and viability in the period just after the Second World War through the early 1950s, so, too, the Australian cinema had a boom period in the middle 1970s until the early 1980s. More to the point, the authors try to bring specificity to the question of the "Australianness" of Australian cinema by comparisons between it and the two cinemas it has been caught between—the American and the British.

The Australian cinema shares with the British cinema the problems of most national cinemas, especially English-speaking ones: of competing in their own country with popular American films; of covering production costs of national product by the national audience; and of trying to break into the mainstream American theatrical market. Britain and Australia relied on direct government intervention to try and maintain a home-grown industry, from a quota system to direct financing of feature films to tax breaks for investors. The authors contend that British films successfully competed with American imports during the period they term "high British cinema": the documentary- and literary-influenced films of directors like David Lean, Carol Reed, and Anthony Asquith, which seem to "reflect and examine and celebrate the feeling of a new consensual impulse and activity in the

national life." (114) The Australian boom period of the late 1970s had some of the same characteristics, specifically, a reliance on literary adaptations, projection of the "national life," commitment to a low-key realism, and a devaluation of melodrama. (To an extent, Australian cinema of its boom period, like its British counterpart, also showed a tendency toward a lack of engagement with contemporary problems.)

High British cinema and boom Australian cinema are explicitly compared to the popular Hollywood cinema, a paradigm which the authors feel is the Classical Hollywood Cinema as defined by Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson (heavily referred to throughout this book). To this paradigm, McFarlane and Mayer add the concept of melodrama and the melodramatic, relying strongly here on the influential work of Peter Brooks. For them, virtually all of the Hollywood cinema is melodramatic: moral Manichaeism, lack of character depth, excessive form, and the arousal in the audience of feelings of indignation followed by just retribution. A number of Australian films are shown to follow this paradigm, although mostly in the pre-boom and post-boom eras, while the high British cinema rejected this paradigm, save for a handful of overt melodramas of the period.

Comparisons between the Australian cinema and the Hollywood cinema, and the Australian cinema and high British cinema, reveal one of the book's problems. The authors slip from the question of a *formal* paradigm (the melodramatic Hollywood cinema) into a question of a *thematic* paradigm (national specificity). Aware of this confusion, the authors first try to account for this shift by recourse to the idea that neither British nor Australian cinema essentially broke from the dominant Hollywood model. Yet neither did the British cinema or its Australian boom counterpart strongly *rely* on the Hollywood paradigm. Thus we find moments within the films of Britain and Australia which veer from the paradigm without breaking from it. The authors are finally forced to admit that "whatever has been new or attractive or stimulating has tended to be at levels of content: stories about British working-class life or the Australian outback." (133)

Another problem is that the comparison between the two boom periods of Britain and Australia is really more of a "parallel" (as the book's subtitle has it) than a source. There is little indication that Australian politicians and film-makers actually turned to British cinema of the postwar era as a model. And while the subtitle allows the authors to claim a parallel rather than a source, one wonders what use this parallel is. Might not such a parallel be found in almost any other short-lived flowering of a national cinema, including non-English-speaking ones? By the same token, the characteristics McFarlane and Mayer isolate as defining this national cinema (literary sources, low-key realism, eschewing of melodrama, and themes of national specificity) are found in other boom periods as well: the Indian cinema of Ray and Sen, a certain strand of postwar French cinema, and even renaissance British cinema of the 1980s.

Finally, McFarlane and Mayer's theoretical models often break down, and are, in fact, the weakest elements of the book. This may be seen clearly in their third chapter, in which they compare a number of Australian films to the narrative/melodramatic traditions established by the Hollywood cinema. Thus, Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* is prized for the way in which it denies the sense of causality and closure so typical of Hollywood, while his later *Witness* is condemned for its total subscription to the Hollywood codes. Yet other Australian films, like *Summerfield* and *Heatwave,* are condemned for being *insufficiently* melodramatic, at the expense of films like *Shame* and *Grievous Bodily Harm,* which thoroughly work *within* the dominant paradigm. Later in the book, in fact, the authors conclude that Australian cinema would be better off artistically and commercially if it more closely followed the narrative drive and melodramatic impetus of Hollywood films. That Australian films do not, however, is not a formal failure on the film-makers' parts, but a statement of thematic significance: the films often close "on a point of emotional pain and/or defeat." (105) Thus the authors seem finally to be quarreling less with a formal paradigm within Australian cinema than with a reflection of the Australian national will.

DAVID DESSER

■ David Desser teaches at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The Politics of Popular Representation
Reagan, Thatcher, AIDS, and the Movies

Kenneth MacKinnon. Cranbury, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1992. $38.50.

Portrayals of AIDS have been present in nearly all mass media for years, including television, newspapers, magazines, even comics. But one medium which has been slow to extensively deal with the issue is film. Perhaps due to the development time needed in movies, or to the mainstream industry tendency to avoid politically risky topics, few films have dealt with AIDS, particularly in the 1980s. Yet Kenneth MacKinnon, in his book *The Politics of Popular Representation: Reagan, Thatcher, AIDS, and*

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the Movies, argues that our cultural understanding of AIDS was greatly influenced by motion pictures in the 1980s even when AIDS was not explicitly discussed. The book addresses the various relationships of 1980s movies to the rise of a political and religious conservatism in both Great Britain and the United States. Ultimately, MacKinnon argues, movies of the Reagan decade set up views of family, sexuality, and morality which may have influenced the social construction of AIDS, including the establishment of rigid categories and preconceptions of people with AIDS.

The book's organization alternates two types of chapters. The first is an analysis of a relevant social issue that has been appropriated by conservatives in the 1980s, such as the family (a particularly relevant chapter given the "Murphy Brown" fiasco in the summer of 1992). The following chapter applies this discussion to popular discourse by analyzing contemporary films' treatment of the issue. For example, after an "Introduction" chapter, chapter 2 deals with the ideology and rhetoric of "The Reagan-Thatcher Epoch," arguing that the dominant right-wing powers of this decade successfully established their view of life and morality, especially with their stress on emotionalism, individualism, and sacrifice. Chapter 3, then, is an analysis of how 1980s movies reflected or challenged these conservative views. Other chapter pairs include "Familialism," "Sexuality," "Homosexuality," and the work concludes with a discussion of AIDS and its imagery in conservative thought and in film.

Overall, the generic political ideology chapters are better than the film chapters. Chapters 2 ("The Reagan-Thatcher Epoch") and 4 ("Familialism"), especially, are insightful summaries of how the conservative wave set the agenda for AIDS discussions and insights, and how a medical condition which became associated with cultural meanings involving fatality, sexuality, deviance, and infection would be affected by a preexisting normative ideology dealing exactly with these issues. However, the chapters which analyze the film discourse about these issues appear disjointed at times, and understanding the overall thesis of the chapter and how individual film interpretations contribute to the thesis is often difficult. In the author's analyses of films from the Reagan-Thatcher epoch, for instance, the films he considers central (such as *Parenthood* and *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*) at times seem disconnected from the other analyses and the earlier political discussion. It is unclear to what extent the reader should conclude that the films celebrated conservatism, rejected that ideology, or projected a mixture, and why the films did what they did and what cohesive picture about film in society we should pull from the discussion. The problem of fragmentation is further exacerbated in chapter 12, "Some Key Films," which presents a deep reading of several films, but reiterates points made in earlier chapters without any strong connecting theme.

The book does do some things very well, however. Although much media criticism of AIDS is either uninformed or purposefully ignores previous scholarship, MacKinnon incorporates the work of such AIDS scholars as Simon Watney and Edward Albert very well into his own criticism. Also, with a few exceptions (such as the work of Dennis Altman), the impact of the right upon our understanding of AIDS is often treated as a given, with no full exploration of the true nuances and implications of this ideology. MacKinnon's book does not fall into this trap. Linking up political ideology with popular culture in such broad strokes is a difficult task, and one that MacKinnon should be commended for attempting.

MATTHEW P. MCALLISTER

■ Matthew P. McAllister teaches in the Department of Communication Studies at Virginia Tech.

Private Screenings
Television and the Female Consumer

Edited by Lynn Spigel and Denise Mann. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992. $39.95 cloth; $14.95 paper.

Private Screenings is an expanded version of a collection of essays on women and television which appeared in 1988 as a special issue of *camera obscura* (vol. 16) edited by Lynn Spigel and Denise Mann. In addition to the essays, the book includes and updates the invaluable source guide from that issue, which lists the holdings of television archives around the country. As a group, the essays in *Private Screenings* have two major concerns: 1) the ways in which women have been represented in television programs (particularly the sitcom) in relation to dominant and oppressive definitions of gender and sexuality; and 2) the ways in which women as viewers, targeted by the television industry as a crucial consumer group, have responded to and appropriated these representations.

One of the best and most representative of the essays, added to the original six from *camera obscura*, is Mary Beth Haralovich's 1989 "Sit-coms and Suburbs: Positioning the 1950's Homemaker" (from *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 11). In this essay, Haralovich analyzes "Father Knows Best" and "Leave it to Beaver" as examples of how sitcoms of the late 1950s presented an

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image of the housewife which served the interests of both suburban developers and the consumer product industry. (128) These sitcoms, we discover, were (and are) as much an advertisement for a way of life, particularly for women, as the commercials were (and are) for the individual products which would then make that life easier or more pleasant.

One cluster of essays examines the significance of the diversity of viewer responses to particular shows which feature female characters. One of the points these essays make is that television viewers, like readers of any text, will interpret a show's meaning to suit themselves, often resisting or contradicting the reading the show is clearly encouraging. However, these stubbornly resistant readings, as Aniko Bodroghkozy points out, are not necessarily a cause for celebration. In "'Is This What You Mean by Color TV?' Race, Gender, and Contested Meanings in NBC's 'Julia,'" Bodroghkozy analyzes the significance of viewer mail in response to questions of racial identity and the politics of representation raised by the sitcom "Julia" (premiering in 1968), which starred Diahann Carroll as a widowed nurse with a six-year-old son. The case study reveals "the ideological extremes viewers could go to in their meaning-making endeavors." (156) Many of these readings, although clearly oppositional, were in fact deeply reactionary, not at all "liberatory or progressive," (156) as those of us in cultural studies often assume oppositional readings of mass cultural texts will be. In another case study, Julie D'Acci provides a detailed account of the production and reception history of the series "Cagney and Lacey," the first to star two women; D'Acci focuses on both the network's insistence on defining these independent women characters as "feminine" and the viewers' ability, despite these limiting definitions, "to read the text for meanings that echoed and shored up their conceptions of themselves as 'non-traditional' women." (193-4) In a related piece entitled "'Kate and Allie': 'New Women' and the Audience's Television Archives," Robert Deming explains how the show drew on the conventions of the "new-woman sit-com," at once reinforcing "hegemonic definitions of gender" and yet opening up possibilities within each episode for resistance to them. (206)

As these examples suggest, the strength of this book lies in the historical context it provides for individual programs and the ways which their largely female audiences interpreted them. Each of the essays is clearly the result of meticulous research. The timing of this volume, however, may be a bit disorienting. That is, those interested in the intersection of feminism, film theory (on which a number of the essays draw), and cultural studies will by now most likely be familiar with the essays here (with the exception of the ones by Bodroghkozy and D'Acci, which are new). A great deal has gone on in television and cultural studies in the last four years or so; it would have been helpful, I think, if the introduction had acknowledged some of this work and situated the essays in the volume in relation to it, in other words, placing the essays themselves in historical context. The issue of timing aside, however, *Private Screenings* definitely does provide a valuable record of the move Spigel and Mann have helped initiate away from what they call "'big bang' theories of mass culture and its social effects" toward close analysis of television programs in their historical context.

BARBARA MORTIMER

■ Barbara Mortimer teaches in the English Department at Rhode Island College.

Robert Drew and the Development of Cinema Verite in America

By P. J. O'Connell. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992. $34.95.

The rise of what critics call either "cinéma vérité" or "direct cinema," and what author P. J. O'Connell terms "cinema verite," constitutes one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of documentary. Although in the excitement of its early development the innovators of cinéma vérité sometimes claimed too much for it—an ability to transparently capture truth or reality on film—cinéma vérité has nonetheless taught us much about the possibilities of the documentary camera and has left an indelible mark on all areas of film-making.

In the history of that movement, the contributions of Robert Drew and Drew Associates have always seemed somewhat mysterious, in part due to the relative lack of scholarship on the subject. Drew is listed as "producer" or "executive producer" for early cinéma-vérité films such as *Primary, Yanki No!,* and *The Children Were Watching.* Given the diverse functions of film producers, what was Drew's specific contribution to these films? Drew Associates, the company headed by Drew, employed such well-known cinéma-vérité film-makers as Richard Leacock, Don Pennebaker, and Albert Maysles. How was such talent employed, and how did Drew function as head of this group? Drew Associates is often given partial credit for the development and innovative use of lightweight 16mm cameras and synchronous sound equipment. How exactly did these innovations come about?

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P. J. O'Connell's *Robert Drew and the Development of Cinema Verite in America* goes some way toward answering these questions, with mixed results. The book proceeds chronologically, detailing Drew's move from a news reporter and photo editor for *Life* to his formation of the company that was to produce television journalism of a new style. Instead of the "word logic" of Edward R. Murrow and "See It Now," for example, it was Drew's goal to develop television journalism making use of "picture logic" and more candid, spontaneous cinematography. Drew has continued making films into the 1990s, and though O'Connell briefly covers this later work, the book concentrates on a period roughly between *Primary* (1960) and *Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment* (1963), and details the production and reception of many of the remarkable films produced during those years.

The book provides a good account of Drew's expressed intentions in making his films and encouraging the development of lightweight and mobile production equipment. We also get a sense of the workings of Drew Associates and its sponsors, and of the tensions that existed between Drew and some of his employees. It is clear that Drew was pulled in opposing directions, on the one hand having to make stories that sold, and on the other wanting to develop the "picture logic" that was to mark this new style of journalism. O'Connell follows the lead of a previous critic, Stephen Mamber, in questioning Drew's imposition of a "crisis structure" onto his films, and asking whether this is "picture logic" or "word logic." The book also implies that many of the tensions that existed between Drew, Leacock, and Pennebaker were a result of Drew's function as producer and editor coming into conflict with Leacock and Pennebaker's interest in cinematography.

The book's weaknesses are significant. It reads like a dissertation (and is in fact based on one). It makes extensive use of interviews with Drew, Leacock, Pennebaker, and Gregory Shuker, but the quotes sometimes lack clarity and purpose. In addition, O'Connell's account of the Drew films is uneven, too often substituting critical pronouncements for the careful analyses that would communicate a real knowledge of the films. For example, though O'Connell deals with their "crisis structure," he nowhere provides a systematic treatment of style and technique in Drew's films.

Robert Drew and the Development of Cinema Verite in America is too often a surface account of the phenomena it describes, part biography of Robert Drew and part account of Drew Associates and its films. My chief disappointment lies here, in the book's lack of scope and ambition. Aside from anecdotal references, we find little attempt to place Drew's contributions in the context of cinéma vérité or television journalism generally. In his preface, O'Connell explains the limitations of his study and admits that its placement "of Drew's efforts within the broader development of cinema verite is skimpy at best." (xiii) Still, we may ask for more. *Robert Drew and the Development of Cinema Verite in America* makes a contribution, but marks only a beginning to the investigation of this topic.

CARL PLANTINGA

■ Carl Plantinga teaches in the Theatre Arts Department at Hollins College in Virginia.

Round Up the Usual Suspects

The Making of *Casablanca*—Bogart, Bergman, and World War II

By Aljean Harmetz. New York: Hyperion, 1992. $24.95.

One of the demonstrable markets for film books today seems to be for those that play upon the public's fascination with cult films and particularly their often unusual conditions of production or reception. But while the first part of Aljean Harmetz's subtitle may hint of pleasures of a common or light sort, her work is above all a solid—and solidly entertaining—contribution to film history. Its central focus is indeed *Casablanca*, one of the most written-about films in American movie history, but its larger subject is the nature of film-making in the World War II era. It is that larger context, combined with Harmetz's definitive unraveling of many of this legendary film's mysteries, that makes all the difference between *Round Up the Usual Suspects* and its various competitors (such as Howard Koch's *"Casablanca": Script and Legend*, Jeff Siegel's *The "Casablanca" Companion*, Frank Miller's *"Casablanca": As Time Goes By*, and my own *The Cult Film Experience*—all appearing recently around the film's fiftieth anniversary).

Certainly, this is the most thoroughly researched book on its subject, drawing extensively on the Warner Bros. and Selznick archives, the Office of War Information files, and the Twentieth Century Archives of Boston University (which houses the papers of numerous Hollywood figures), among many other sources. As a result, it seems almost a model of thorough historical research into a single film's production, into Warner Bros.' situation in the pre- and early war years, into the nature of the American film industry in this period, and even into the shifting concerns of our culture at the time. Moreover, it is an historical account that is told in a lively manner and

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thoroughly illustrated, with a variety of production stills, private photographs, and, most tellingly, reproductions of studio memoranda, shooting schedules, and assorted publicity materials.

What Harmetz achieves through this historical investigation is a product that should still prove quite pleasing to the film buff and particularly to the *Casablanca* cultist. For her book moves us much closer to the work. One of the key attractions of many of our classical cult films—works like *Gone with the Wind, The Wizard of Oz, Rebel Without a Cause*, or *Casablanca*—is the set of myths that have grown up around them and, in the process, cloaked them in an aura of mystery that sets them apart from the larger body of our cinematic history and marks them as almost intangibly *different*. Many other books, perhaps most effectively Howard Koch's insider's account, *You Must Remember This* (recently reissued), have managed to trade on this mystery or embellish *Casablanca*'s storied difference—in the creation of its script, the casting of its key players, or the manner in which it was shot. But Harmetz casts her net more widely than any previous study of this film, allowing from the start that *Casablanca* was "shaped by multiple forces—stars, directors, censors, a government at war, the studios, and the times themselves." She then sets about sifting from among these forces the various unfounded suspicions, faulty assumptions, and general myths the film's fans and even historians have fashioned or embraced over the years.

Her research shows, for example, that it was not Hal Wallis, as legend—and his rather self-serving autobiography—would have it, but rather Irene Lee, head of the Warners Story Department, who found and recommended purchasing the rights to the source play, *Everybody Comes to Rick's*. With access to Murray Burnett and Joan Alison's original play, Harmetz also demonstrates that, contrary to Koch's claims for his own contributions to the *Casablanca* script, all of the major characters—albeit under different names—and nearly all of the film's key events flow from its literary source. And for all of Ingrid Bergman's comments through the years that she did not know how to play her character's emotions, since she was never sure which man she would end up with, we learn from the shooting schedule and production memoranda that the ending was finalized and shot before a number of other key scenes—ones in which she did have to play with full knowledge of her final, ambiguous commitment to "Laszlo and the cause."

Of course, the result of these and other revelations is on one level a demystifying of the film as well as of some of the legendary figures associated with it. Through the book's lens we see the Hollywood of the early 1940s, but a Hollywood with its blemishes intact. Jack Warner appears in all of his bullying nature, which Harmetz attributes to a basic insecurity and even a fear of the writers and other talented figures with whom he had to deal. The often faulty recollections of Ingrid Bergman and Paul Henreid remind us of the industry-inflated egos of the Hollywood star—then as now. And the formula-bound thinking of the industry, even in the early 1940s, shows all too clearly. In any case, this historical revisioning is no small accomplishment, even if that demystification is at some cost, draining away the romantic notion that this film was almost magically put together, as if it practically dictated its own shape through a kind of organic growth.

Yet Harmetz manages to conjure up for our inspection what may ultimately prove a far more compelling sort of mystery, as we look into the inner workings of the Hollywood studio system as it sought to balance the demands of the time and culture with its own quite successful industrial practices. Here, in fact, may be the greatest value of this book—its ability to mine the mythic for a genuine contribution to film and cultural history.

That Hollywood has always sought, as Harmetz puts it, "to create a celluloid America that did not exist then and does not exist now, a happy land of racial and class equality," is generally acknowledged, even if it does not typically filter down into many popular histories. Her ability to keep that notion consistently in focus here is a major accomplishment, for it allows her to give some emphasis to the manner in which the film industry, especially in the case of a work like *Casablanca*, went about its creation of a "cultural imaginary" during the war years. In fact, in Harmetz's detailed account of Warners' activities, we find a rather dynamic sketch of the process at work in this era, as the studios tried to accommodate various governmental and popular pressures while also serving their primary purpose as profit-minded purveyors of entertainment.

Harmetz also manages to retrieve a sense of how the studio system in its most productive period worked, and how, almost in spite of the sort of assembly-line principle that guided much of its operations, it could consistently produce meaningful and enduring works—and even craft out of what one critic termed "pure hokum" a film that movingly embodied our culture's complex responses to the landmark event of the century. For a generation that is not attuned to or even informed about the workings of this system, that instead only knows the world of agents, producers, deals, and hype that is the contemporary American film industry, this book should prove of major value. For film historians and critics, it is no less so.

J. P. TELOTTE

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Settling the Score
Music and the Classical Hollywood Film

By Kathryn Kalinak. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992. $45.50 cloth; $17.95 paper.

In the conclusion of *Settling the Score*, Kathryn Kalinak cites composer Miklós Rózsa's observation that "'music is still considered as the salt that makes cinema meat taste better, but not as an equal ingredient . . . in the kitchens of cinema cooks.'" (205) It is the intent of Kalinak's study to redress this marginalization of music in discussions of film history and practice, and to assert nondiegetic film music's shared importance in narrative cinema's production and reception. *Settling the Score* is both successful in this goal and provocative for the profusion of questions it suggests for further study.

Relying upon Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson's model of classical Hollywood cinema, Kalinak outlines the conventions of the classical score and charts their variation and reinscription from the silent era to the present. The study is anchored by an assertion that, historically, classical scoring conventions "transcended idiom . . . medium . . . and even personal style . . . to exert a controlling influence on what audiences heard when they went to the movies." (203) Or, perhaps, did not hear. Kalinak argues that analysis of film music has been relegated to marginal status by a cultural visual bias and, to a certain extent, by individual fears of analyzing music from an "untrained" critical position. Within the academy in particular, the author notes, entire generations of film students and teachers have neglected the formal study of film music (as both an industrial practice and in terms of continuing and reformulated cultural associations or connotations).

While the engaging, extremely accessible writing and visually striking style of *Settling the Score* (including well-researched illustrations ranging from archival artifacts to advertisements and studio photographs) suggest the book's potential success as a general film-library addition, readers from within academia will be struck by its value as a companion text for both introductory and advanced film courses. Kalinak's extensive research, archival, and interview material (including her integration of popular press sources such as *Moving Picture World*, her cogent explanation of fundamental vocabulary for and method of musical analysis, her foregrounding of the historical/industrial context of Hollywood film/film music production, and her survey of both classical and contemporary theoretical approaches to film music) combine to create an excellent model for film study.

Settling the Score is organized in two parts, the first of which is concerned with musical, historical, and theoretical questions, and the second of which builds upon and exemplifies these concerns via case studies of different expressions of the classical score (each of these chapters takes as its subject one composer/studio relationship, as exemplified in one film). While the first part of the book serves as a necessary foundation for what follows, Kalinak underscores the potential autonomy of each of the chapters in her introduction. Prior versions of the author's case studies of *The Informer* and *The Magnificent Ambersons* have, in fact, been previously published, and the book could be read by picking and choosing among discrete articles. While this recommends the book for use in teaching excerpts and also fosters a certain amount of repetition and recapitulation across chapters, the reader who tackles *Settling the Score* whole will be rewarded by an understanding of the cumulative historical weight behind classical scoring practice—its nature as a system which allows much variation, but variation that is always carefully inscribed to ensure narrative priority and continuity.

While Kalinak suggests that the first chapter of her book is intended for those who consider themselves "nonmusical," it significantly outlines the basic properties of Western musical values and logic (i.e., tonality and melodic structure). Here, Kalinak also reveals her interest in cognitive psychology and theories of affect with regard to musical structure. These concerns lead to the second chapter's concise but foundational discussion of the "visual bias" in Western culture—a bias which includes the assumption that music appeals to the emotions while vision appeals to rationality and that, therefore, sight is a "rational check" on the intuitive response to music. The author outlines classical and contemporary theorists' approaches to film music here, concluding with strains of French psychoanalytic theory's association of music with the feminine. Unfortunately, as Kalinak's overriding interest lies in setting out a survey of music's structural importance in film narrative, she does not expand upon these concepts to explore the potentially gendered character of music (as stereotypically feminine in its associations with emotion, irrationality, and the prelinguistic), and the possible impact of those associations upon the cultural bias which privileges the visual, rational, and linguistic (the seen can be spoken/explained/enter into meaning).

Each of the case studies is structured around the biography, work habits, and textual production of—by historical determination—a series of well-known male composers (e.g., Max Steiner, Bernard Herrmann). Especially in her discussion of *Laura* (chapter 7), Kalinak exemplifies the richness of film-music analysis, and suggests the need for much further study of cultural biases

and musical associations. Her analysis of David Raksin's score argues that the confusion pervasive in the narrative is illustrated in the score's challenge to prevailing musical conventions in the representation of female sexuality and in its multiply-inflected variations upon a monothemic score. Kalinak notes that Raksin, Vera Caspary, and Otto Preminger all had differing conceptions of Laura. This blend of perceptions is illustrated in Raksin's invocation of both jazzy instrumentation (conventionally coded as connoting "otherness" and threat) and the "sweet" standard symphonic melody which became such a widely popular commodity—instrumentation and styles allow for the film's famous structural and ideological ambiguity.

Kalinak's strength is, perhaps, her synthetic approach to the introduction of concepts of film music and its dialogic relationship with the image (that is, her exploration of industrial practice in historical context through specific textual examples). My reservations regarding this approach—and the author's strict adherence to the Bordwell-Staiger-Thompson model—are simply that Kalinak's own critical position and stake in the argument seem somewhat muted or shunted aside in an effort to clearly illustrate the classical system's operation. For instance, points which Kalinak alludes to, but does not have the space to develop, include the problematizing of Claudia Gorbman's accepted model of audience reception of film music in terms of a classical paradigm of the "untroublesome social subject." Since authors such as Mary Carbine have recently challenged this notion (1989), reception context and the significance of musical cultural connotations—as Kalinak's own study of *Laura* suggests—would seem to be an area ripe for further analysis. Equally, with regard to cultural connotations of music, Kalinak frequently references the communicative power of certain musical motifs (such as the "Scotch snap") without being able to expand upon how genres and genre films might be largely constructed and understood by musical invocations. Entire chapters also remain to be devoted to the influence of television and other media on cultural musical connotations and their translation to film music. Finally, since the contemporary vogue for preexisting music within films would seem to echo the silent era's "comparative rarity of the completely original composition," (51) how might this relate to changed or reinstituted visual style and/or audience viewing/listening practices?

Overall, once Kalinak's study establishes the visual bias common to cultural and critical reception and discussion of film, she clearly defines the characteristics of the classical Hollywood score through its historical development, variation, and institutionalization. From the silent film score's principles of continuous playing and the early standardization of leitmotivic scoring to the studio system's institutionalization of sound film score practices, and then the breakup of the studio system and the age of the synthesizer, *Settling the Score* offers a highly readable discussion of film music using examples from easily accessible film texts. Kalinak is, finally, successful in achieving her stated goals. The reader is thus left with an overwhelming curiosity and sense of urgency about what remains to be done in excavating film music's relationship to film narrative.

VICTORIA E. JOHNSON

■ Victoria E. Johnson is a Ph.D. student at the University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television.

Sound Theory/ Sound Practice

Edited by Rick Altman. New York: Routledge, 1992. $45.00 cloth; $14.95 paper.

Sound Theory/Sound Practice is the third major anthology on film sound to appear in a dozen years. The first, *Cinema/Sound* (1980), a special edition of *Yale French Studies*, was also edited by Rick Altman; it challenged—and wounded—the Anti-Sound-Pro-Images Dragon. *Film Sound: Theory and Practice* (1984), edited by Elisabeth Weis and John Belton, was more modest in tone but probably conquered just as much ground, for as a classroom textbook that collates many of the most important earlier essays on film sound, it has facilitated access to these texts and circulated an important bibliography and glossary.

My dominant reaction upon reading this latest anthology is to marvel at how far the field has come in such a comparatively short period of time. The essays are free of defensiveness about the importance or the legitimacy of their subject, and dead-horse issues—such as asynchronization—have been left behind. The contributors (collectively) have educated themselves about acoustics, about technology, about areas of film history previously overlooked, about the relationships between sound in film and the practices of other media. Their results show that this field of research is rich and mature.

Sound Theory/Sound Practice contains 13 formal essays, plus five substantive introductory sections by Rick Altman. Altman's influence is heavily apparent throughout; indeed, he authors two of the 13 essays, and many of the other contributors are graduate students or recent Ph.D.s from the University of Iowa, where Altman

and musical associations. Her analysis of David Raksin's score argues that the confusion pervasive in the narrative is illustrated in the score's challenge to prevailing musical conventions in the representation of female sexuality and in its multiply-inflected variations upon a monothemic score. Kalinak notes that Raksin, Vera Caspary, and Otto Preminger all had differing conceptions of Laura. This blend of perceptions is illustrated in Raksin's invocation of both jazzy instrumentation (conventionally coded as connoting "otherness" and threat) and the "sweet" standard symphonic melody which became such a widely popular commodity—instrumentation and styles allow for the film's famous structural and ideological ambiguity.

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teaches. Such strong editorial control leads to a relative uniformity of approach; as a whole the volume shows more interest in technological, historical, and phenomenological approaches and less interest in psychoanalytic, feminist, formalist, or narrative perspectives (perspectives found variously in the work of others interested in sound, e.g., Mary Ann Doane, Kaja Silverman, Amy Lawrence, and myself).

The volume is broken down into three sections: "Theoretical Perspectives," "Historical Speculations," and "Neglected Domains." Of these, the latter is the least compelling because the articles—while generally competent and sometimes intriguing—offer a scattershot of approaches to texts as diverse as *Surname Viet, Given Name Nam* (Amy Lawrence), Warner Bros. cartoons (Scott Curtis), Shakespeare films (Mary Pat Klimek), *An American Family* (Jeff Ruoff), and Tarkovsky films (Andrea Truppin).

The anthology's most lasting impact will come from its earlier essays. Altman's "The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound" has the dubious distinction of being one of the most awkward titles ever coined, yet by carefully walking through the process from the original disturbance of sound waves by some event to the final moment when an auditor hears a recording of the original event, Altman effectively demonstrates how many factors complicate and affect the process. James Lastra's and Steve Wurltzer's essays similarly challenge previous assumptions about sound: Lastra by questioning the habit of thinking of recordings as *degraded* copies of originals, Wurltzer by untangling the interstices of "live" and "recorded" sound.

The historical essays, all of which deal with American cinema, similarly dovetail together neatly and use history to reevaluate theoretical assumptions. Alan Williams reexamines issues concerning the transition to sound; Nastas Durovicova's essay on Hollywood "multilingual films" comes to interesting conclusions about why dubbing replaced the practice of producing alternate versions of a film in multiple languages; John Belton's essay on why stereo sound was not successful in the 1950s ends up illuminating popular conceptions of realism.

Sound Theory/Sound Practice has its quirks. Its glossary is not user friendly. It eschews the opportunity of updating the bibliography on sound, referring readers back to Claudia Gorbman's bibliography in *Film Sound* (surely one of the points of producing another anthology is that the field has grown in the last decade?). Moreover, only a few of the essays offer prose that is invitingly readable—undergraduates could probably make their way through any of these selections, but they will find it hard slogging.

And despite the anthology's strengths, I am troubled by a subtle but recurrent pattern here, a pattern of slighting film dialogue. This interest in "decentering speaking cinema" (110) becomes blatant in Michel Chion's essay "Wasted Words," which explicitly calls for dialogue to be inaudible, unintelligible, ad-libbed, or untranslated. But Chion's essay is merely the most explicit—the bias against film dialogue is also apparent in the scornful tones in which several authors discuss how Hollywood chose to mike for intelligible sound quality over more logical/realistic spatial perspective; and in the fact that so many of the contributors focus on music or sound effects as their central examples; and even in the fact that there are only a handful of snippets of dialogue quoted in the whole book. (Even Klimek's essay on Shakespeare adaptations—which is the only one to mention the artistry of language—seems to go out of its way to *describe* the dialogue as opposed to quoting it.) In *Cinema/Sound*, Altman himself spoke of dialogue in particular as "the silent cinema's repressed" (13)—why is it still repressed? Can the study of film sound become as rich and central a field as we would wish without a complete acceptance of spoken words?

SARAH KOZLOFF

■ Sarah Kozloff, author of *Invisible Storytellers: Voice-over Narration in American Fiction Film*, teaches at Vassar College.

Strains of Utopia
Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music

By Caryl Flinn. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992. $39.50 cloth; $12.95 paper.

In an ideal world, film theory would recognize both the aural and ocular components of film as equally important aspects of the filmgoing experience. Caryl Flinn's *Strains of Utopia* seeks to address the current overemphasis on the visual by focusing on the role of the film score in classic Hollywood cinema. Although not the first to note the predominance of nineteenth-century Romanticism within studio scoring practices of the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s, Flinn is practically alone among writers on film music in focusing on the nostalgic function of this music rather than its possible origins. As she notes in her introduction, "[S]erial music would be considered inappropriate, say, for a film such as *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938)—although Erich Korngold's actual score, composed in the style of late nineteenth-century romanticism, has scarcely been at-

teaches. Such strong editorial control leads to a relative uniformity of approach; as a whole the volume shows more interest in technological, historical, and phenomenological approaches and less interest in psychoanalytic, feminist, formalist, or narrative perspectives (perspectives found variously in the work of others interested in sound, e.g., Mary Ann Doane, Kaja Silverman, Amy Lawrence, and myself).

The volume is broken down into three sections: "Theoretical Perspectives," "Historical Speculations," and "Neglected Domains." Of these, the latter is the least compelling because the articles—while generally competent and sometimes intriguing—offer a scattershot of approaches to texts as diverse as *Surname Viet, Given Name Nam* (Amy Lawrence), Warner Bros. cartoons (Scott Curtis), Shakespeare films (Mary Pat Klimek), *An American Family* (Jeff Ruoff), and Tarkovsky films (Andrea Truppin).

The anthology's most lasting impact will come from its earlier essays. Altman's "The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound" has the dubious distinction of being one of the most awkward titles ever coined, yet by carefully walking through the process from the original disturbance of sound waves by some event to the final moment when an auditor hears a recording of the original event, Altman effectively demonstrates how many factors complicate and affect the process. James Lastra's and Steve Wurltzer's essays similarly challenge previous assumptions about sound: Lastra by questioning the habit of thinking of recordings as *degraded* copies of originals, Wurltzer by untangling the interstices of "live" and "recorded" sound.

The historical essays, all of which deal with American cinema, similarly dovetail together neatly and use history to reevaluate theoretical assumptions. Alan Williams reexamines issues concerning the transition to sound; Nastas Durovicova's essay on Hollywood "multilingual films" comes to interesting conclusions about why dubbing replaced the practice of producing alternate versions of a film in multiple languages; John Belton's essay on why stereo sound was not successful in the 1950s ends up illuminating popular conceptions of realism.

Sound Theory/Sound Practice has its quirks. Its glossary is not user friendly. It eschews the opportunity of updating the bibliography on sound, referring readers back to Claudia Gorbman's bibliography in *Film Sound* (surely one of the points of producing another anthology is that the field has grown in the last decade?). Moreover, only a few of the essays offer prose that is invitingly readable—undergraduates could probably make their way through any of these selections, but they will find it hard slogging.

And despite the anthology's strengths, I am troubled by a subtle but recurrent pattern here, a pattern of slighting film dialogue. This interest in "decentering speaking cinema" (110) becomes blatant in Michel Chion's essay "Wasted Words," which explicitly calls for dialogue to be inaudible, unintelligible, ad-libbed, or untranslated. But Chion's essay is merely the most explicit—the bias against film dialogue is also apparent in the scornful tones in which several authors discuss how Hollywood chose to mike for intelligible sound quality over more logical/realistic spatial perspective; and in the fact that so many of the contributors focus on music or sound effects as their central examples; and even in the fact that there are only a handful of snippets of dialogue quoted in the whole book. (Even Klimek's essay on Shakespeare adaptations—which is the only one to mention the artistry of language—seems to go out of its way to *describe* the dialogue as opposed to quoting it.) In *Cinema/Sound*, Altman himself spoke of dialogue in particular as "the silent cinema's repressed" (13)—why is it still repressed? Can the study of film sound become as rich and central a field as we would wish without a complete acceptance of spoken words?

SARAH KOZLOFF

■ Sarah Kozloff, author of *Invisible Storytellers: Voice-over Narration in American Fiction Film*, teaches at Vassar College.

Strains of Utopia
Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music

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In an ideal world, film theory would recognize both the aural and ocular components of film as equally important aspects of the filmgoing experience. Caryl Flinn's *Strains of Utopia* seeks to address the current overemphasis on the visual by focusing on the role of the film score in classic Hollywood cinema. Although not the first to note the predominance of nineteenth-century Romanticism within studio scoring practices of the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s, Flinn is practically alone among writers on film music in focusing on the nostalgic function of this music rather than its possible origins. As she notes in her introduction, "[S]erial music would be considered inappropriate, say, for a film such as *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938)—although Erich Korngold's actual score, composed in the style of late nineteenth-century romanticism, has scarcely been at-

tacked for committing the same infidelity." (4) Conventional wisdom tells us that this practice was a direct result of the mass emigration of Europeans to California concurrent with the rise of Fascism. Flinn argues that this cannot explain Romanticism's strong appeal to Hollywood, because "Hollywood had been deploying romantic scoring techniques long before" the 1930s; instead, she claims the appeal lies in Romanticism's "utopian promise." (24)

Her first chapter is a rather lengthy exploration of the classical approach to Hollywood film-score composition and analysis. She is especially concerned with comparing Hollywood's use of devices such as the leitmotif with Wagner's (from whom much of the Romantic aesthetic—at least as it manifested itself in the classical Hollywood cinema—originated). For example, although both Hollywood and Wagner perceived the leitmotif as motivated by dramatic and not musical necessities, in Wagner's music dramas unity was achieved through a synthesis of elements, while in standard Hollywood scoring practice unity was believed to be the result of "redundancy and overdetermination." (34) Flinn also includes a lengthy and cogent description of music's ability to restore plenitude in the cinematic apparatus, the film text, and the viewing/listening situation.

The next two chapters focus on other theoretical approaches to film music, namely poststructuralism and Marxism. Surprisingly, however, all of these perspectives are saddled with the same difficulties concerning film music: "the problem of reflectionism; music's so-called representational 'difference,' a difference usually tied to the idea of excess and femininity; and the pervasive association of music with a desirable lost past." (88) These two chapters are not merely intellectual pyrotechnics, however, for they serve to introduce the connections between music and femininity in theoretical descriptions.

The next chapter contains a fuller explication of the concept of utopia. Of particular importance is the introduction of Ernst Bloch's belief in music's anticipatory power. Especially significant is his belief that utopian elements do not fundamentally strive to regain the past, but may function as guidelines for future change. This idea is crucial for Flinn's comparison of two films in chapter 5, *Detour* (1945) and *Penny Serenade* (1941)—examples (and, for Flinn, exemplars) of film noir and the maternal melodrama, respectively.

Flinn's insightful analyses of these two films are among the highlights of the book. She effectively makes the case that *Detour's* male protagonist is haunted by the film's music and cannot escape his dystopian past, whereas the female protagonist of *Penny Serenade,* although also musically haunted by her past, is able to construct a new, potentially utopian future from the partially signified utopian moments from her past. Despite her lucid and convincing argument, I fear Flinn may have set up something akin to the proverbial straw man here by focusing on two film types that, as critical thought unilluminated by theories of film music tells us, foreground such concerns.

Flinn's final chapter emphasizes the role of subjective interpretation in locating and describing film music's utopias, making it extremely difficult to find fault with Flinn's analyses. However, I feel it necessary to offer a counter-interpretation of the use of the song "Dixie" in *Gone with the Wind* (1939), one admittedly influenced by my background as a Southerner. Flinn states that "Dixie" is used in this film "in a clear effort to authenticate the period as well as to confer upon its listeners, classically enough, the appropriate mood. 'Dixie''s upbeat tempo and melody make it readily enjoyed and easy for auditors to appreciate the initial carefree scenes of the film, and listeners familiar with its opening, wistful lyrics are even more predisposed to the song's nostalgic underpinnings. None of this is very subtle, of course. Nor is it very simple, for the antebellum utopia constructed is quickly deconstructed by the fact that the southern tunes are performed in minor keys." (109) In the first place, Flinn seems unaware that to many Northern or Southern African Americans this song does not necessarily bring on fond memories of a lost past. Secondly, to some white Southerners, the song may carry more militaristic than home-bound connotations. Finally, the use of a minor key does not a priori indicate that a sense of nostalgia is being deconstructed (because it supposedly injects a note of sadness into an otherwise happy memory); in fact, in this case it probably contributes to the wistfulness associated with nostalgia.

A more fundamental problem with the text concerns Flinn's use of Bloch's attitudes about music's "prophetic abilities." (97) In describing this viewpoint, she states, "In a gentle but significant revision [of Nietzsche], Bloch proposes instead that Wagner was the 'fulfillment' of Mozart, suggesting less that Wagner's music summed up Mozart or Mozart's age than that it revealed traces *(Spuren)* of the future that had already been imbedded." (96) This anachronistic view of historical development, although once popular (especially with regard to the development of forms, genres, and styles in the middle of the eighteenth century) is now no longer accepted by most musicologists. That Flinn seems unaware of this is perhaps not surprising, considering the mild disdain in which she seems to hold the field. In the introduction to the book, she claims that musicology "has been slow to acknowledge the influence of culture, economics, and ideology on its object of study." (10) This is an unfair criticism, especially with regard to the branch of musicology known as ethnomusicology, which is specifically concerned with music's "immediate social, institutional, and discursive framework." (9–10) Recognition of the contributions

ethnomusicologists have made to the study of music and culture (both Western *and* non-Western) is glaringly absent from her discussion of music's ability (or possible lack thereof) to represent the culture out of which it originated.

In spite of these minor criticisms, *Strains of Utopia* represents a thoughtful and thought-provoking addition to the literature on film music. By focusing on the aural component of films rather than the music's contribution to the visual component, Flinn provides a glimpse of a future where the analysis of film scores may tell us more than simply how they contribute to the narrative of a specific film.

DENNIS LLOYD

■ Dennis Lloyd teaches at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Women and the New German Cinema

By Julia Knight. New York: Routledge, 1992. $54.95 cloth; $17.95 paper.

Proportionally there are more women film-makers working in Germany today than in any other country in which films are produced; yet most of these women have had to struggle to break free from the marginalization and ghettoization into which they and their films had been driven. By the second half of the 1970s, when Germany's new cinema had become the focus of international attention, American and British film critics were paying homage to the triumvirate of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, and Wim Wenders without even mentioning the work of Ula Stöckl, Danièle Huillet, or May Spils (whose *Zur Sache, Schätzchen/Go to It, Baby* beat the competition, including all American films, at German box offices in 1968, the year of its release). In their publications, observers of the New German Cinema generally represented the contributions of women film-makers as illustrations of the women's film, rarely as individual and individualistic accomplishments of film-makers who may have little in common beyond their gender, but whose films have helped define feminist film culture and have been a significant influence on the work of others, including their male colleagues.

Julia Knight's study goes a long way toward illuminating the unfairly neglected terrain of women and the so-called New German Cinema. Her concise overview of German women film-makers ranges from Olga Wohlbrück, Lotte Reineger, Leontine Sagan, and Leni Riefenstahl to the first post-Oberhausen Manifesto women and beyond. The first of the book's two main parts details how the development of women's film-making is a history divided and rather different from that of the men who made The *American Friend*, *Fitzcarraldo*, or *Fox and his Friends*, and how British and American critical reception of the colorful, often outrageous auteurs from the newly found filmic landscape did little to change the dominant perception that the contributions of women film-makers were marginal and insignificant. The second part of the book delineates the effects of the women's movement and resulting institutional initiatives on women making films, poses the question of a feminine aesthetic, and ends with the upbeat assertion that the 1980s were a decade of undeniable improvement for women film-makers in Germany.

Ula Stöckl would disagree with Knight's optimism, I suspect. Although her 1984 feature film, *Der Schlaf der Vernunft* (*Reason Asleep*), won major awards, several years passed before she could finance her next project, *Das alte Lied* (*Pits*), which had its premier at the 1992 Berlin Film Festival. Doris Dörrie, on the other hand, might maintain that the 1980s were good to her, but that she's always felt she'd had an advantage as a woman. Forcing the reader to realize that Germany's film-making women are not a homogenous mass is one of the book's strengths; its goal is not to present exhaustive critical evaluations of individual film-makers and their films but to uncover the particular characteristics of women's film-making during the last two decades in Germany.

The book contains refreshingly few typographical errors: Knight's enthusiasm gets away from her as she has Doris Dörrie's *Men*... take in over ten million dollars on opening day in New York; since that kind of box-office performance would have resulted in a sequel or two and various attempts at television sitcom spin-offs by now, the actual (for a foreign film very impressive!) figure is $10,000. However, such minor blemishes should not detract from *Women and the New German Cinema*, a most welcome addition to the growing body of vital scholarship on feminism and film. Because the book is so accessible in terms of its content and its style, it would be a suitable choice as a supplementary or even main text for any course on recent German cinema.

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Next to Riva's astonishing document the considerable accomplishment of Steven Bach's carefully researched and well-sourced biography rather pales. Bach's is most definitely the biography of record, but its style is pedestrian and journalistic. Amazingly, Riva's book presents a more believably sympathetic picture of Dietrich's foremost director, Josef von Sternberg, than does Bach's—and Bach studied under him in the late 1960s. One actually feels for Riva's Sternberg, even as Bach seems to be flashing back to his experiences at United Artists during the making of *Heaven's Gate* with his incessant references to Sternberg "abus[ing] every advantage for his art."

GREGG RICKMAN

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Wheeler's book juxtaposes his own comments with Truffaut's writings, presented more or less chronologically, from 1954 *Cahiers du Cinéma* reviews, often squibs, through longer pieces often devoted to favorite directors. Sometimes Truffaut bloodies other critics. Sometimes he compiles a journal. Most times the writing is signed. Sometimes it is pseudonymous, perhaps because of a polemical thrust, perhaps because the author's name has appeared too often in the journal already.

Forty years later, a reader ventures into very few pages before some dander starts to twitch. Many reviews, the early ones especially, read like little more than dashed-off plot summaries, concluded by an evaluative whim. And there are matters of B-picture lore. *The Mummy's Hand:* " . . . Kharis—a mummy who is neither male nor female . . . " *The Las Vegas Story* has a quarter-hour of chase and " . . . four more of equal dullness." Hoagy Carmichael was never dull.

Dixon's own annotations equal Truffaut's contributions in length and exceed them in depth, responding to the reviews with largely partisan favor while expanding the directorial references. One can dispute Dixon too, but that's part of the fun. (If Jack Arnold's later films are "laughable hack work," what about *The Mouse That Roared* in 1959?) Yet most of his commentary is even-handed, and he can effectively summarize a directing career as obscure as Ray Milland's.

Truffaut was one Frenchman who found Jerry Lewis's "triumphant stupidity" distasteful. On balance, his breadth of interest is phenomenal. His impatience, triggered by overkill, glib psychology, and pretension in films like *Shane* and *Giant*, mixed with enthusiasm toward lean programmers like Richard Fleischer's *The Narrow Margin* and Jack Arnold's *Girls in the Night*, recalls no one more than Manny Farber.

A child of his country, Truffaut the writer seems born with a tongue coated by irony and thirsting for epigram. These early, sometimes hurried results, spilling out of a passionate young man, are perhaps allotted more concerns than they can sustain. "She runs off screaming, but we don't feel sorry for her because she isn't pretty." The book proposes that Truffaut "has not progressed beyond the infantile stage of 'unlimited, immediate, and everlasting gratification.' " Here as elsewhere, the reader is free to draw his own conclusions.

JOHN FELL

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Truffaut was one Frenchman who found Jerry Lewis's "triumphant stupidity" distasteful. On balance, his breadth of interest is phenomenal. His impatience, triggered by overkill, glib psychology, and pretension in films like *Shane* and *Giant*, mixed with enthusiasm toward lean programmers like Richard Fleischer's *The Narrow Margin* and Jack Arnold's *Girls in the Night*, recalls no one more than Manny Farber.

A child of his country, Truffaut the writer seems born with a tongue coated by irony and thirsting for epigram. These early, sometimes hurried results, spilling out of a passionate young man, are perhaps allotted more concerns than they can sustain. "She runs off screaming, but we don't feel sorry for her because she isn't pretty." The book proposes that Truffaut "has not progressed beyond the infantile stage of 'unlimited, immediate, and everlasting gratification.' " Here as elsewhere, the reader is free to draw his own conclusions.

JOHN FELL

Parish, James Robert and Michael R. Pitts. *The Great Hollywood Musical Pictures.* Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1992. $79.50. As soon as one sees *After the Dance*, a minor one-hour vintage musical (1935) among the "great" films included in this volume, it becomes evident that Parish and Pitts are film enthusiasts who want to salvage overlooked curiosities (and personal favorites?) of the genre.

Therefore, they forewarn the reader that certain personal favorites may be missing, so that the overall delight

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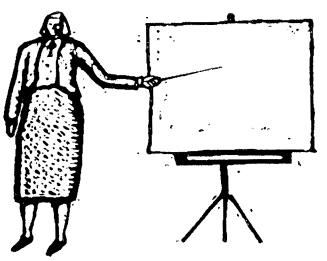

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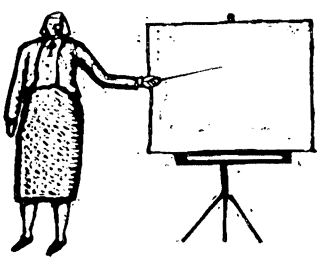

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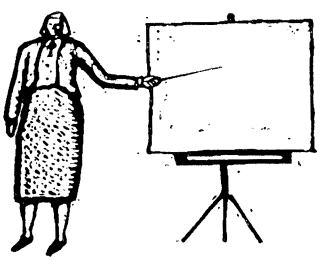

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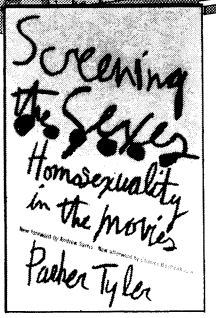

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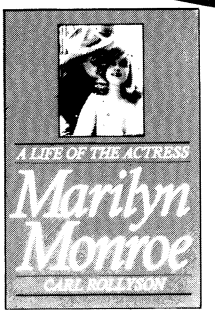

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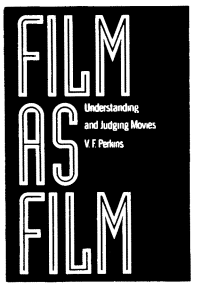

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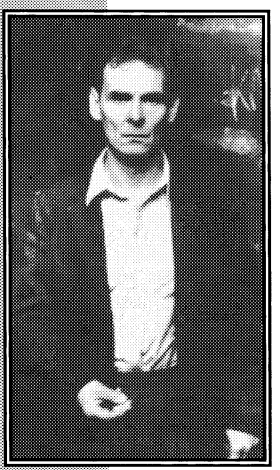

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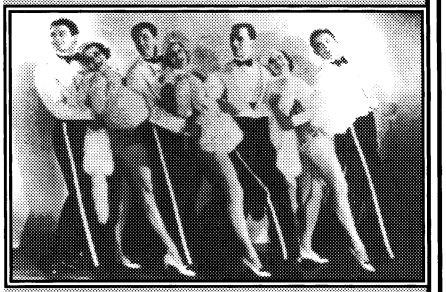

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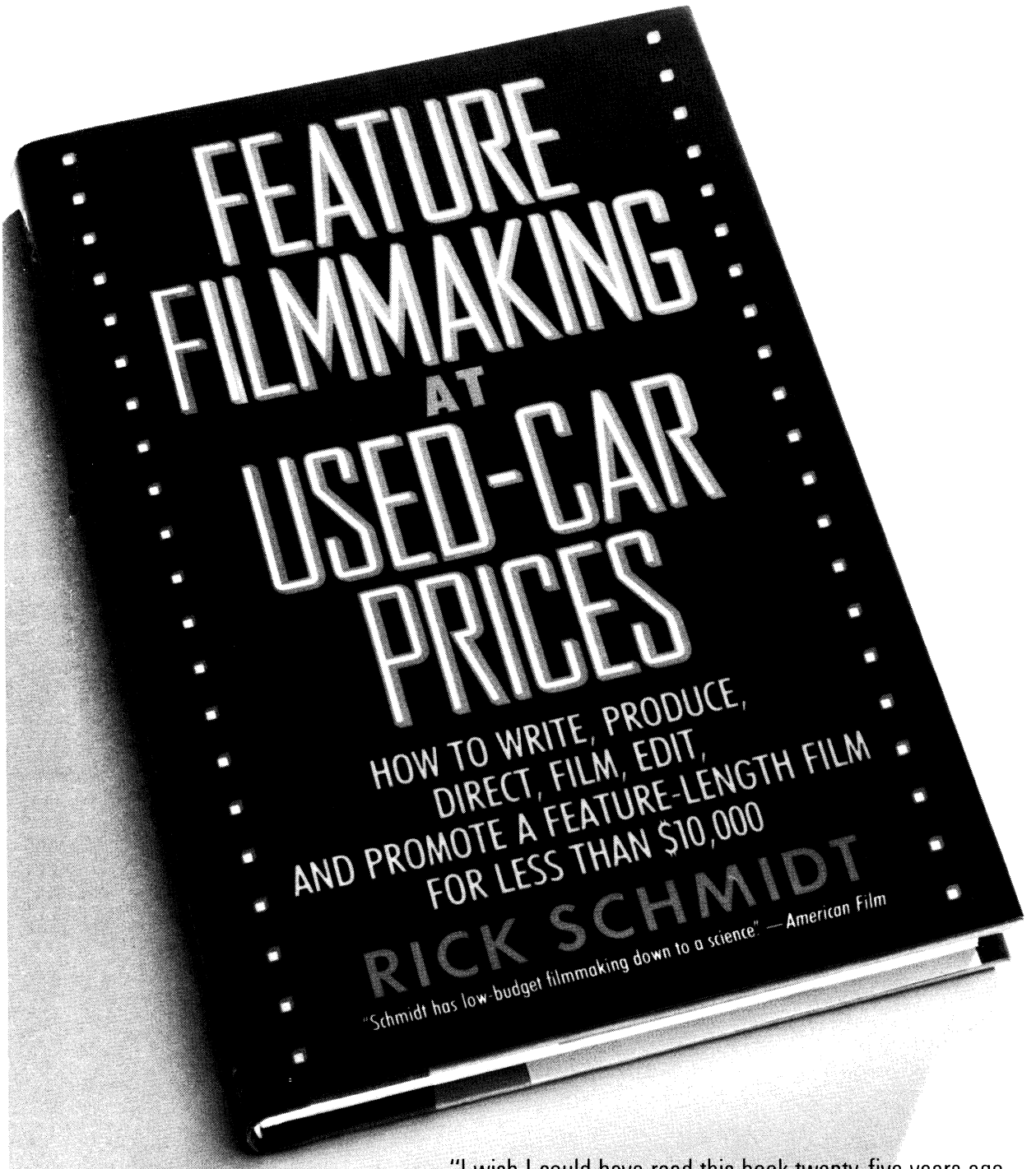

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